TRIAL by FARCE

A Dozen Medieval French Comedies in English for the Modern Stage

Edited and Translated by

Jody Enders

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Cover Art. Three young men pull down a judge's breeches as he administers justice. Boccaccio, *Le livre appellé Decameron* (1514); translated into French by Laurent de Premierfait. MS-5070; fol. 287v. Bibliothèque nationale de France. Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal. https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b7100018t#

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For my students. Again and again and again.

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To my brilliant friends, colleagues, collaborators, and family: I thank you for bringing joy and laughter into our virtual lives during the pandemic. Once again, you've inspired me with your knowledge, your craft, and your humor. Noah Guynn and Thierry Martin seemed always to be available to talk farce, each bringing his own dazzling perspective to the proceedings, as was my oldest friend in the profession, Peggy McCracken. So too was the inspirational and ever-generous Natalie Zemon Davis, who literally wrote the book on how to approach premodern legal thinking. And then there were my Virgilian guides through the forest of legalese, medieval and modern: Valerie Allen, Dan Jaffe, Ada Kuskowski, and especially Sara McDougall, who delved gleefully into any arcane piece of canon law that I brought her way. Nor will I ever be able to offer sufficient thanks to Mario Longtin, who crowned our decades of friendship by vetting *Trial by Farce* for Michigan, offering one of the most magnanimous and collaborative engagements that it has ever been my privilege to read. Most of all, as the usual read-throughs, workshops, and talkbacks moved to the virtual table of Zoom, the following fellow travelers helped to create community in often humorless times as we made merry across three time zones. For their stunning video performances and insights, I owe a special debt of gratitude to Katie Brokaw, Leo Cabranes-Grant, Jane Faulkner, Noah Guynn, Dan Jaffe, Erith Jaffe-Berg, Eric Jorgensen, Wolf Kittler, Gisela Kommerell, Mario Longtin, Jason Narvy, Dan Reeve, Sara McDougall, Annika Speer, Heather Terbell, and Beth Wynstra.

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Last but never least, I acknowledge my favorite audience member of all time: my husband, Eric D'Hoker, the proverbial *bon public* and never one to shy away from a good laugh. Heaven only knows that, from 2020 to 2021 and, still resonating thereafter, we needed one.

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PREFACE

If you're familiar with the *Farce of the Fart*, *Holy Deadlock*, or *Immaculate Deception*, you will notice some big changes. Keeping in mind the readers, teachers, and performers seeking to access these plays, I've forsaken those hundreds of professorial footnotes in favor of a dramatically streamlined presentation. In 1999, André Tissier did much the same thing when translating his sixty-five editions of Middle French farces (*RF*) into modern French (*FFMA*). Electing to present essentially the scripts alone, he reduced thirteen volumes to five and pointedly observed that "at the theater, the public sees not a single professor come forward to provide explanations or commentary: the audience is attending a show" (*FFMA*, 1: 337). He was right.

In *Trial by Farce*, "Brief Plot Summaries"—snapshots in teaser form—still guide your choice of what to read, teach, or perform. But my earlier Production-Note categories of "Plot," "Characters and Character Development," "Language," "Sets and Staging," and "Costumes and Props" now yield to a single, holistic quick-take. Only a newly titled composite section remains as "Sets, Costumes, or Props," which serves to flag any dramaturgical specifications not addressed by each play's stage directions. Also preserved: the listing, "Scholarly References to Copyrighted Materials," paired with a new "Appendix," the better to suggest possible playlists for farce's trademark songs while simultaneously respecting postmedieval copyright protections. So, sit back and enjoy easy access—open access—to the show.

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A SPECIAL NOTE TO ACTORS AND DIRECTORS

Medieval farce, you might ask? That nadir of sexism, misogyny, and classism? For *moi*?

Mais oui, pour vous. Yes, it really is for you.

Even in contemporary times rife with contemporary concerns, farce fits in anytime, anywhere, and everywhere. Try it as comic relief during the entr'acte of a tragedy or of a raucous end-of-the-year law revue. Try it as a very-old-but-new-again one-act for your BFA or MFA program, reconceived for the #MeToo era—and the French have one too, by the way: a #MeToo movement, that is, called #BalanceTonPorc or "Snitch on your pig." Try it as a freestanding outdoor event or a slate of such events. Try it as a monitory dystopia or a bona fide tragedy, dramaturgically redesigned to reassimilate and recast the ghastly politics of so many early oppressors. But do try it. *Stuff it in*—that's one of the meanings of the French verb *farcer*, after all—and experiment with what can happen when we don't tell it to get stuffed.

No matter how you cut it—and farce always cuts both ways—it deserves a rightful, if not always righteous, place on today's international stage. In a new world order and, with full artistic license, it can also be made to do what theater always does: adapt and readapt, inflect and reinflect, fashion and refashion, interpret and reinterpret (below, "ABT"). How all that comes to pass is entirely up to you.

Comedy, theater, and the comic theater are ever of the moment, and no cultural historical or contextual moment is ever quite the same. Like theater, humor must change with the times, even when seemingly finalized on a printed or virtual page like the one you're reading. The same holds true for the present offerings, which are not meant to be carved in stone. Consider them blueprints, full-fledged sketches of any number of performance scenarios in which there remain blanks to be filled in by you and you alone. Since these plays will come back to life only through the limitless imagination of the engaged performer, you have an active role to play in their res-

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urrection. Perhaps it will be through updated slang, music, or jokes. My students wisely experiment with them regularly, regardless of how it affects the rhyme scheme or pacing (below; "ABT," § "The Language of Farce"). Perhaps you find farce's propensity for archaisms a tad too anachronistic and wish to rejuvenate them by a decade, a generation, or a century or two. Perhaps it will be through technologies that were unfathomable on the fifteenth- or sixteenth-century stage. Or perhaps it will be through a dramaturgy that visibly undercuts any original sexist or classist message. If anything, I'd urge that the subversions possible through pantomime be permitted to work their magic. Indeed, the power of the nonverbal, one of theater's fortes, might well constitute our last best hope for the survival of a brand of medieval humor to which we can nonetheless give its due. Discipline and punish farce, if you so desire. Make it behave itself or allow it to misbehave like crazy. But do see and hear what it has to say. In so doing, you honor the theater writ large and performed large, in that you too have become a translator.

There's one more thing about these scripts. I'm not an actor; I just play one in these books and in the classroom. I recognize that actors have a unique way of reading. Many prefer, à la Stanislavski, to build their own characters or to imagine sets and staging with only scant dramaturgical guidance. But there is a delicate balance to be negotiated here between providing *for you* just enough, but not too much, dramaturgical information, at the same time that I provide *more than enough* for other readers with very different needs. Please do bear in mind that many will be students of all ages—not necessarily theater majors—who might have been assigned a farce or two in their large lecture courses in history, comparative literature, Shakespeare, or—who knows?—law school. They will not be as experienced as you are in envisioning the comic vibrancy of the move from page to stage. But, whoever you are and whatever you do, that's why, in my farce series, I keep repeating my mantra: approach each play as if it were prefaced by a Magritte-like statement that *ceci n'est pas un scénario. This is not a script.* It is and it isn't. It must, it will, and it should change. And that change is you.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND SHORT TITLES

Many medieval farces bore simple titles on the order of "*The Farce for [Two, Three, Four, or Five] Characters*," but I designate them throughout by the English titles (and occasional subtitles) that I've bestowed upon them. To facilitate research, I use parenthetical documentation whenever practical, referring to frequently cited works by the abbreviations below:

"ABT"	"About This Translation" from this book.
AG	*Aspects of Genre*. By Alan Knight.
APF	*Art Poétique françoys* (1548). By Thomas Sébillet.
ATF	*Ancien Théâtre françois*. 10 vols. Edited by M. Viollet le Duc.
CFSM	*Choix de farces, soties et moralités*. Edited by Émile Mabille.
Collection	*Collection de différents ouvrages anciens, poésies et facéties*. Edited by Pierre Siméon Caron.
Copenhagen	*Nouveau Recueil de farces françaises des XVe et XVe siècles [du Recueil de Copenhague]*. Edited by Emile Picot and Kristoffer Nyrop.
CWFR	*The Complete Works of François Rabelais*. Translated by Donald Frame.
DBD	*Death by Drama and Other Medieval Urban Legends*. By Jody Enders.
DLU	*Description et analyse d'un livre unique qui se trouve au Musée britannique*. By Octave Joseph Delepierre.
DSI	*Dictionnaire thématique et géographique des saints imaginaires, facétieux*. By Jacques Merceron.
FCMF	*Five Comedies of Medieval France*. Translated by Oscar Mandel.
FF	*"The Farce of the Fart" and Other Ribaldries*. Edited and translated by Jody Enders.
FFMA	*Farces françaises de la fin du Moyen Âge*. 4 vols. Translated into modern French by André Tissier.
FGS	*Farces du Grand Siècle de Tarabin à Molière*. Edited by Charles Mazouer.

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HD	*Holy Deadlock and Further Ribaldries*. Edited and translated by Jody Enders.
ID	*Immaculate Deception and Further Ribaldries*. Edited and translated by Jody Enders.
LM	*Les Mystères*. 2 vols. By L. Petit de Julleville.
MBA	*Murder by Accident*. By Jody Enders.
MES	*The Medieval European Stage, 500–1550*. Edited by William Tydeman.
MFST	*Music in the French Secular Theater*. By Howard Mayer Brown.
MTOC	*The Medieval Theater of Cruelty*. By Jody Enders.
PF	*Pure Filth*. By Noah Guynn.
RBM	*Recueil du British Museum*. Facsimile edition by Halina Lewicka.
RC	*[Recueil Cohen] Recueil de farces françaises inédites du XV^e^ siècle*. Edited by Gustave Cohen.
Répertoire	*Répertoire des farces françaises*. By Bernard Faivre.
RF	*Recueil de farces (1450–1550)*. 13 vols. Edited by André Tissier.
RFlorence	*Recueil de Florence*. Edited by Jelle Koopmans.
RFMSJ	*Recueil de farces, moralités et sermons joyeux*. Edited by Antoine Le Roux de Lincy and Francisque Michel.
RLV	*Recueil La Vallière*. Reprint entitled *Manuscrit La Vallière*.
ROMD	*Rhetoric and the Origins of Medieval Drama*. By Jody Enders.
Rousset	[Rousset, Nicolas.] *Recueil de plusieurs farces, tant anciennes que modernes* (1612).
RPF	*Recueil de plusieurs farces, tant anciennes que modernes* (1872–73). Expanded reedition by Charles Brunet.
RTC	*Répertoire du théâtre comique en France au Moyen-Âge*. By L. Petit de Julleville.
RTLF	*Le Recueil Trepperel: Les Farces*. Edited by Eugénie Droz and Halina Lewicka.
SFQS	*Sotties et Farces du XVe et du XVI^e^ siècle*. Edited by "Maître Antitus" [Thierry Martin].
TB	*The Theatre of the Basoche*. By Howard Graham Harvey.
TFFMA	*Le Théâtre des farces en France au Moyen Âge*. 5 vols. Edited by Michel Rousse.
TFR	*Le Théâtre français avant la Renaissance*. Edited by Édouard Fournier.

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Introduction

Judgment Calls

"Objection, Your Honor, leading the witness."

"Objection, Your Honor, browbeating."

"Objection, Your Honor, asked and answered."

"Objection, Your Honor, calls for a conclusion."

It's a little exercise that I do on Day One when teaching the interrelations of law and literature. I'm the Prosecution, the students play the Defense, and I instruct them to object to anything improper. I proceed to grill an imaginary witness rudely, repeatedly, and unfairly, at which point the objections above typically come fast and furious. I then ask:

"Are any of you lawyers?"

No.

"Anybody been to law school?"

No.

"So, how did you know what to say?"

Sometimes, it's from having appeared in court themselves; sometimes, mom or dad is an attorney; but, invariably, it's this: *from watching television.*

"For edification?" I inquire.

No. For fun!

Of course, for fun!—even if we're edified in spite of ourselves.

I've yet to encounter a class that fails to object in due form or, in a companion exercise, to recite the Miranda warning verbatim: "You have the right to remain silent, you have the right to an attorney," and so on. We're not lawyers; we just play them—or see them—on TV. Or in the classroom. Or on stage. Or off. We speak legalese as fluently, albeit more cannily, as Molière's *bourgeois gentilhomme* spoke prose. And I doubt very much that fifteenth- or sixteenth-century French spectators were any more turned off by theater's deep dive into the intricacies of legal rhetoric than are twenty-first-century Americans by twenty-five years of *Judge Judy*.

Notwithstanding Adolphe Fabre's formative objection of 1882 to medieval

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plays that were "stuffed . . . with legal terms, formulas, procedures, and juridical definitions" to the point of "repugnance" and "monstrosity" (*Clercs du Palais*, 55; 37–38), terms of art and specialized lexicons have never stopped us from enjoying procedural dramas, actual procedures, or comical proceedings. Long before social media aided and abetted the spread of true and false beliefs about the rule of law, fictional and nonfictional representations were shaping our perceptions of legal and illegal, right and wrong, fair and unfair, ethical and unethical, moral and immoral. Nowadays, we have gavel-to-gavel coverage of sensational trials, Congressional grillings of potential Supreme Court Justices, and umpteen iterations of *Law and Order*. Back then, they had the four daughters of God adjudicating the fall of humankind in the celestial court of Arnoul Gréban's Passion play (*ROMD*, 169–204), saints disputing the Devil, and momentous judicial verdicts like that of *The Farce of the Fart's* "he who smelt it dealt it" (*FF*, 71). From ancient Greek tragedy to Jean Racine's *Les Plaideurs* to *The Crucible* to *The Return of Martin Guerre* to—yes—*Judge Judy*, the suspenseful wait for justice has always made for high drama or, in the dozen farces to come, low drama.

Consider now the stock phrase, *that trial is a farce!* Truer words were never spoken of the early theater or, for that matter, of contemporary culture. So say the plays here assembled as they hurtle gleefully toward that most crucial of forensic denouements: Judgment Day, be it Christian or secular. If, as another saying goes, "the law is an ass," the characters in this book are litigating—and laughing—their literal asses off.

Farce to Farce with the Law

Once upon a time in the mid-1400s, the jurist Thomas Basin leveled this complaint against the "contagiously influential" litigator who "gnaws at, stalks, and exhausts the very essence of . . . the people who, already somewhat and even too litigious by nature, are taken in and caught up in ever more numerous disputes and judicial actions that are almost infinite . . . ." (*Apologie*, 262–63). Sound familiar? But whatever was a community to do about him? (That's right: it used to be a *him*.) Kill all the lawyers? *Mais, non!* Stage them. And, while you're at it, stage all that gallows humor too, wherever and whenever injustice and inequity reigned supreme. Give us a supremely comical kangaroo-court's-eye view of the world.

Where medieval English drama bore the imprint of sponsoring guilds, its counterparts in France and the Low Countries drew inspiration from law-

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yers, lawyers everywhere.[1] It sufficed to look around and there they were: pontificating in civil and ecclesiastical courts, holding forth in classrooms, arbitrating under trees, debating in public squares, and coaxing truth (or the appearance thereof) from arguments pro and contra. No surprise there. The French authors of over 200 comedies—more extant than in any other European vernacular—were, for the most part, lawyers, law students, and legal apprentices. They belonged to the Basoche, a society founded in 1303, which at one point boasted as many as 10,000 members in chapters throughout France. During their heyday (1450–1550), the Basochiens not only litigated real actions of the small-claims variety: they authored and performed the lion's share of farces, fools' plays (*sotties*), and mock trials (*causes fictives* or *causes grasses*).[2]

First and foremost, they were orators and rhetoricians; and their expertise in performance had been honed by centuries of codified wisdom about delivery, the fifth part or canon of classical rhetoric (*actio* or *hypokrisis*). In that capacity, they were linked to the very origins of drama in France, maximizing the effect of the genre's key foundational components as identified by O. B. Hardison in the paradigm-shifting *Christian Rite and Christian Drama* (1–34). Like the Christian liturgy that was the subject of Hardison's 1965 study, the law courts featured their own sort of theatrical space, costume, staging, ritual conflict, audience participation, spectacle, dialogue, action, and above all, impersonation (*ROMD*, 54–68). As dramatic rhetoric perennially morphed into rhetorical drama, the Basochiens blurred what few boundaries might have remained between law and entertainment (*ROMD*, 3–18). For all those reasons, they more than deserve to join the larger conversation about the transhistorical interrelations of law, literature, and popular culture. And that's not all, folks.

The Basochial brand was still going strong in 1632, as evidenced by such comedies as *Marriage with a Grain of Salt* (*HD*, #12) or by our closing *Runaway Groom* (#12). And let's not forget the Basochiens' starring role in the history of satire. Take this little piece of publicity that I've cited before and cannot resist citing again. It's for one of their carnivalesque *causes grasses*—that's *grasse*, as in Mardi *Gras*—in which they promise to lay bare the folly of the law:

> In this particular case, you will see eloquence in the flesh, stripped to the bone[r], totally naked: alive, male, and virile [*On void dans ceste cause l'éloquence paroistre toute nue, en chair et en os, vive, masle et hardie*]. . . . The intention of the litigators is always to stimulate the audience's laughter, not their empathy [*commisération*]: indeed, *who wouldn't laugh at the judges alone of*

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> *this momentous trial, practically pissing themselves trying to hold back their laughter with all their might?* Or at the lawyers who have the honor of litigating there, speaking gravely and seriously of the most ridiculous things in the world? (cited in translation by Harvey, *TB*, 22; my emphasis)

French comedy did not spring fully formed from the head of Molière. Hardly. The Basochiens participated in a tradition as old as the mock encomium of Greco-Roman antiquity and as new as the moot courts that spring up in modern law schools, to say nothing of those rowdy, tension-releasing, end-of-the-year revues. Thanks, moreover, to feminism and feminist dramaturgy ("ABT"), we've come a long way from the nakedly misogynistic eloquence that was the standard medieval and Renaissance university fare. Those were the days when young men cut their teeth on the Senecan disputational exercises known as the *Controversiae*, which called for them to ponder such horrifying brainteasers as "The Man Who Raped Two Girls on a Single Night." Indeed, that selfsame premise undergirds our *Witless Protection* (#10) and *Johnny Slowpoke* (#11). After the Senecan character commits his crimes, one girl "demands his death, the other marriage" (*Controversiae*, 1: 5; Woods, "Rape," 67). And yet, whatever progress has been made by today's broad-strokes refusal to sanction sexism, bigotry, or classism, the spectacular nature of the law itself has not waned. Nor has the massive cross-cultural outcry against the historic failures of judicial systems (ecclesiastical or civil) to police their own. Nor has the public thirst for the cathartic release provoked by one of the greatest plotlines of all time: seeing justice done.[3]

Such was the stuff of the Basochial theater, where casts of conventional characters also clamored for their due. If their counterparts in Passion plays focused on the theological transformation of Old Testament justice into New Testament mercy (*ROMD*, 173–80), the present noisy crew staged more everyday struggles with the legitimacy of religious and secular authority. Or with authority, period, as they now summon you to laugh the law courts out of court. In the immortal words of *Law and Order*, this is their story.

Make way, then, for them to traffic in tales of primogeniture, torts, canon law, adultery, bastardy, prenups, "postnups," rape, ravishment, and malpractice (legal or theatrical). Jointly and severally, our plays explore such keenly lived juridical experiences as these: the loss of marital consortium as grounds for annulment (#1); defaulting on one's marital debt (*devoir conjugal*) when sexual payment to the spouse comes due (#2); the contractual distribution of domestic duties (#3); adultery (#4); paternity (#5); bigamy and remarriage (#6); inheritance (#7); customary law and hostage-taking (#8); clerical celi-

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bacy and concubinage (#9); the trustworthiness of eyewitness testimony (#10); pimping and proxenetism (#11); and the financial consequences of being left at the altar (#12). Brought to you by the Basochiens, this is Contracts 101 for popular consumption; and popular it was. It still can be if we're willing to hop on a wild carnival ride through that quintessential legal sequence of investigation, trial, retribution, and reparation.

First up: meet the nubile young bride of *Not Gettin' Any* (#1) who has yet to enjoy the consummation of her marriage . . . after an entire month . . . and counting. She is flanked by her sister in arms of *Default Judgment Day* (#2), similarly frustrated by a husband who is majorly in arrears with the requisite marital deposits. As in "sex." Next, we make the acquaintance of another wife who is all too eager to take the law into her own hands. Too bad that, when she henpecks her spouse into a renegotiated division of marital labor in *The Washtub* (#3), she neglects to anticipate a gaping legal loophole. Meanwhile, the jealous idiot of *Basket Case* (#4) takes the law—and his wife—into his own hands by toting her around in a basket in order to forestall her illicit extramarital fornication. Seriously. What else was he supposed to do? Don't you remember what happened to Lot's wife at Sodom and Gomorrah? Guess what? Neither does he. And neither does the friendly neighborhood priest.

Be that as it may, the ramifications of adultery remain as dire as they had been when King Arthur fell to the illegitimate Mordred. It was enough to leave a poor bastard feeling like a fatherless child. Certainly, the title character of *Jenin, Filz de Rien*—Johnny of *Who's Your Daddy?* (#5)—feels that way when his mom informs him that he was sired by . . . nobody at all. Make that *nothing*. His dad was a shirt, she affirms, or maybe it was a jacket. Or maybe papa was a rolling stone. Or two rolling stones. Or maybe, as in the quick surrealistic romp of a charivari that is *Beauballs* (#6), we don't rightly know who is birthing and who is getting birthed. At the midpoint of our farcical journey, *Beauballs* segues to the more metaphorically poor bastards of—you guessed it—*Poor Bastards* (#7). If you lived in Basin's Normandy and were luckless enough *not* to be the firstborn son, you were, quite literally, a poor bastard: outranked, outinherited, and unappeased by an oldest brother's munificent proffer of a legacy of all the leeks you can eat (#7). Or what about when undistinguished traits were passed on legitimately from a cowardly mayor to his chicken-stealing kidnapper of a son? In *Talking Turkey* (#8), the latter cannot keep his story straight in a trial scene that rivals that of the famous *Farce of Master Pierre Pathelin* in which a matter of stolen sheep plays out in nonsensical counterpoint against stolen cloth. And, speaking of poetic justice. . . .

What exactly was a single girl to do when she couldn't get any? Justice,

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that is. Or sex. Or a husband. Take it up with Cupid himself in *Okay, Cupid* (#9), a premodern version of *The Dating Game* in which the God of Love musically orchestrates a premarital conference. If, however, Cupid favors keeping marriage off the table, that is in no way the case in *Witless Protection* (#10), where a mother demands holy wedlock as the appropriate legal redress for her deflowered daughter. So too do three more women in a tragicomic spin on that Senecan debate topic of "The Man Who Raped Two Girls." When the unrepentant serial fiancé of *Johnny Slowpoke* (#11) backs out of all three betrothals, the women lobby for the same ostensible remedy: marriage to their abuser. Last but not least, our grand finale saves us a ringside seat at the marital festivities of a union that does, in fact, take place. But watch out for the proto-catfish of *Runaway Groom* (#12). Published in 1632—two years prior to that Basochial *cause grasse* cited above and near-contemporaneous with Molière's first play, *The Flying Doctor* (1645)—*Runaway Groom* completes the picture of a very long Middle Ages that extends substantially beyond the classic chronological markers of 500 to 1500.

In a word, it is impossible to overstate the importance of the law to the French theatrical spirit and to history writ large. Far from it. It is often thanks to the law that we get wind of the medieval European theater in the first place.[4] Its traces survive because something illegal, immoral, ill-advised, or irreligious caught the watchful eye of a local official, a king, a bishop, a chronicler, or, as with the unnamed individual who took a heavy hand to *Witless Protection* (#10), a censor (whether he be self-appointed or municipally appointed). As early as 1301, for instance, near London, the Prioress of Clerkenwell bade King Edward I to mitigate the environmental "damage which the people of London cause[d] with their frequent miracle plays and wrestling-matches, devastating and destroying her corn and grass. . . ." She was successful in her plea for relief (*MES*, 166–67). Elsewhere, in one of the earliest recorded legal incidents in French theater history, we discover that two mortal accidents marred two separate mystery plays in 1380 and 1384, prompting jurists to weigh levying charges of murder (*MBA*, 29–66). Near Paris in 1395, a woman was gang-raped under some theatrical scaffolding (Enders, "Spectacle of the Scaffolding"); and, in 1485 in Bar-le-Duc (about 250 kilometers east of Paris), an actor in a Passion play reportedly raped his wife while wearing his devil costume (*MBA*, 67–87). By the same token, we know that a nativity play was staged in Amboise in 1496 because of the ensuing lawsuit filed by the tradesman Mathurin Prunelle. Prunelle had lost some two hundred of the beams that he had contributed for the associated theatrical scaffolding: "about a hundred of the beams were stolen and the others were split and spoilt by the

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nails used for the said scaffold[ing]" (*MES*, 311). And, in July 1511 in Dijon, the marriageable daughter of one Jacot Casotte was apparently so over-the-top in her takedown of an incompetent actor that she and the actor's wife served up a parallel spectacle of themselves when they came to blows (Rousse, "Une Représentation," 107; Gouvenain, 39).

Innumerable such episodes dot the legal landscape, some of which I'll take up again shortly under the rubric of freedom of speech. They are all fodder for farce, all fodder for our understanding of theater's leading role in the cultural reverberations of crime and punishment. We need not have waited for Michel de Certeau's *Practice of Everyday Life* or Alan Read's *Theatre and Everyday Life* to discern what the historian Jacques Le Goff characterized as the large-scale propensity of medieval culture to "play itself out" (*Medieval Civilization*, 357). Feigning, fakery, impersonation, deception, simulation, and dissimulation were as ubiquitous in law as in life. In 1474, a murderous conspiracy was outed owing to a widow's insufficiently convincing rendition of bereavement (Enders, "Foul Play"). In 1503, a rapist's theatrical expertise in costume-making facilitated his flight from the jurisdiction of Metz when, according to the prolific chronicler Philippe de Vigneulles, the popular comic actor Jehan Mangin (*grans fairceur*) "procured women's clothing with which he disguised himself [*ce desguisait*]." In a setup reminiscent of that of *Bro Job* (*ID*, #7), "he pulled it off so well that, with a little basket full of sheets and a washing bat in the aforesaid basket, it was not possible to recognize him. And in that getup, pretending [*faindant*] to go do the washing at the river, he passed through the gate of the Thieffroy Bridge without being recognized and thus found a way to escape" (*Chronique*, 4: 27–29; Longtin, "Jehan Mangin"). Thirty years later in Grenoble, one Pierre Bucher, Esquire (*docteur en droit*), bowed out of his leading-man commitment to play Jesus Christ and was sued for damages. Notes Petit de Julleville in *Les Mystères*: "Bucher was none the worse for it. By 1539, he had become the replacement for the same Procurator who had prosecuted him in 1535; and afterward, he succeeded him" (2: 127–28). Law and theater would continue their collaboration for centuries to come, with new generations looking to them for the letter, spirit, and spiritedness of cathartically administered just deserts. Although Montesquieu was not to pen his landmark *L'Esprit des Lois* (*The Spirit of the Laws*) until 1748, let's recall that, in French *l'esprit* means not only "spirit" but "wit." Body and soul, farce ministers to the soul of wit and to the spirit of the laws.

Initially, our connection to this material might well strike you as tenuous: as tenuous as that of the law's so-called "laughing heir." Historically, *he* is laughing because, as the distant relative of a wealthy deceased person,

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he is inheriting a fortune, albeit with little or no personal connection to the dearly departed. (*Downton Abbey* anyone?) It is nevertheless conceivable that men—and women—can reclaim their status as the laughing heirs of farce. So, get ready to make a joyful noise unto . . . the *law*. The French call it just that—legal *noise*—and, as always, the cacophonous characters of farce want to make some. I invite you, therefore, to dismiss as null and void anything that you might have heard about farce's retrograde and reactionary predispositions (*HD*, 14–18). Farce is fun. It's edgy. It's politically incorrect. But, with the right dramaturgy in place, it can also be activist and inclusive, creating new visions of the proverbial liberty and justice for all. We are unlikely to see that, however, if the specter of twenty-first-century judgmentalism forestalls laughter at early modern judgments. Instead, we might postulate with Sara Beam that "when common French men and women lost the freedom to joke about farts and to mock judges in public, their political freedoms were compromised as well" (*Laughing Matters*, 2). With a little bit of poetic license and a pinch of tolerance for the wide berth customarily granted to satire, I prefer to paraphrase the axiomatic wisdom of contract law by allowing that any ambiguity can be resolved in farce's favor. Case closed.

Or is it?

On the Boundaries of Humor

It is not my goal to sketch a sociology of why people laugh. Ralph Lerner's *Playing the Fool*, F. H. Buckley's *The Morality of Laughter*, and Bremmer and Roodenburg's collection, *A Cultural History of Humour,* do an excellent job of that for the literarily inclined. So too, for medieval humor do Martha Bayless, Louise D'Arcens, Nicole Sidhu, and Lisa Perfetti, to name but a few. That said, we do well to bear in mind the central paradox of satire as framed elegantly by Buckley: "the more intense the satire, the fewer laughs it raises. The Paradox of Satire is that it asks the reader to share its rancor; and if it succeeds the satire fails" (50). But, beyond the reader alone, does the same hold true for the *viewer* of satire? My students invariably complain that their assigned reading is sexist, classist, and ethnocentric. They're absolutely right: it *is*. All the more so when they're *reading* rather than *viewing* it, at which point, their perspective normally changes. Thanks to the live, physical action of theater, satire may indeed find a space for laughter and rancor alike, even as its own space has been steadily shrinking.

In the current political climate, satire has paid a hefty price at a time

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when we have never needed it more. For Andrew Kay, the ongoing perils were such that, in 2018, he was moved to observe for the *Chronicle of Higher Education* that the contemporary satirist must reckon with a "cluster of menaces" that tend to "repel efforts at humor" ("The Joke's Over"). Much as Wendy Steiner had done before him in *The Scandal of Pleasure* (1–8), Kay submits that generations of students and teachers—to whom I would add theater practitioners and theatergoers—are afraid to laugh. As for the satirist, Kay concludes that the sheer scale of the intolerance "can hector him into muteness." To which, again, I would add something else: *her too*. But neither he nor she nor they nor we are aided by canceling satire altogether or, for that matter, its cousins, parody, irony, and comedy.[5] The loss of the liberty of laughter can hardly be a proportional response to genres that indicted as much as they amused.

Who gets to satirize and, to the extent that satire can still be taught at all, who gets to teach it? In each iteration of my farce courses, my students cannot help but wonder whether they would tolerate a male professor teaching them the same obscene, violent, misogynistic body of work that I do. Does the professor's gender identification make the difference? Or is it just their sex? Their race? Their class? Their ethnicity? Their religion? Their politics? Who belongs in the conversation? Additional questions arise immediately, among them: Who gets to translate satire ("ABT," § "Translational Politics")? Who gets to laugh? And, indubitably germane in an anthology of juridically inspired farces: Who gets to sit in judgment of the laughter of others?

It is no coincidence that, in the closing *envois* of so many farces and mystery plays, actors routinely issued a plea for tolerance.[6] They were subjected to constant scrutiny, lest their words reach the level of prosecutable obscenity, *lèse-majesté*, or heresy. As early as 1398, for example, a Parisian edict proscribed the production of any farces or saints' lives that had not been preauthorized (*LM*, 1: 414–15). In 1447 in Dijon, the farce providing comic relief to the *Mystère de Saint Eloi* alarmed so many attendees with its potential for *lèse-majesté* that the local prosecutor, Jehan Rabustel, insisted on seeing the original text. (In their defense, the actors countered that, had they been aware of any defamatory remarks against His Majesty or the Dauphin, they would most assuredly have ceased and desisted posthaste [Bouhaïk-Gironès, "Le Procès," 117–19; 131–34]). By 1476, another edict enjoined the Basochiens from mounting almost anything but mystery- or miracle plays. Performers of farces, *sotties*, or morality plays were not to be countenanced at the Châtelet or at any other public place "under pain of banishment from the kingdom and confiscation of all their goods" (*MES*, 333).[7] And, then, there were the

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prison terms, as when Francis I jailed three Parisian Basochiens, *sots*, and *farceurs* in 1516 (*MES*, 336n).

In short, those involved with farce were at risk of considerably more than the proverbial cancellation. A misplaced word, a violation of a censor's mandate, a barb launched at a political or ecclesiastical authority might result in a loss of liberty, livelihood, or, in the following extreme circumstances described by Michel Rousse, life. When the Rouennais actor Jehan Bourgeois was tortured and subsequently burned at the stake in 1549, his fellow actors, hypothesizes Rousse, were forced to make public amends that same year for having "spoken with temerity of God and the saints" and for "possessing forbidden books" ("Une Représentation théâtrale," 115). To echo the old Sonny Curtis song, if you fought the law, the law usually won. Nowadays, if you buck popular opinion, it's more than likely that Twitter wins.

It is nothing if not ironic that irony seems dead. Laughter too sometimes, whomever it may offend; and offend it does. With virtually endless bills of particulars, commentators flock daily to the internet to amplify their outrage whenever a typically unspoken boundary is pushed too far.[8] But pushing the boundaries to their breaking point is the *raison d'être* of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century French farce. Are we simply to cast aside the daring comic playwrights of yesteryear as latter-day casualties of the postmedieval cultural battles about what is, what isn't, or what ought to be funny? Or mightn't we find new ways—theatrical ways—of appreciating their special satirical talent for speaking truth to power? Is there no chance to join early spectators in laughing at others and at ourselves? Or is any impolitic laughter beyond the pale? Medieval people had a sense of humor and God only knows they needed one (*ID*, 15). Do we?

In one way or another, all questions of that nature—and many more besides—seek to identify and to define the boundaries of humor and, ever more urgently, to monitor, legislate, and enforce those boundaries. As I was preparing this book, the fictional Professor Dobson in Netflix's *The Chair* lost his tenured position for having mimed, for purposes of parody, a Nazi salute. Once his decontextualized gesture was posted on the internet, it quickly incited a confrontation that mockingly harkened back to a real incident at Yale in 2015 (Friedersdorf, "The New Intolerance"; "The Perils"). But, when Senior Lecturer Catherine West Lowry was relieved of her teaching duties for having screened an extra-credit student video that parodied Hitler, that was no fiction (Zahneis, "Was It Wrong?"). Nor was there any place in her classroom for satire to do what it does: push back. Nor was public outrage in any way fictional for Kathy Griffin when, in 2017, she created a parodic visual of

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a jihadist beheading of Donald Trump. Griffin promptly lost her job hosting CNN's New Year's festivities, an event that is scarcely known for its decorum (Wong, "CNN Cuts Ties"). I invoke those three representative instances of visual or gestural satire because they are painfully relevant to theater studies: they ignited firestorms with little or no assistance from the spoken word. Theater is, after all, a medium that hosts not just language but static images and moving pictures (*ROMD*, 47–54). So too does any holistic translation thereof (below, "ABT," § "Translational Politics"). But, for now, permit me to say this: inasmuch as I've offered up this repertoire as morally, ethically, and palatably stageable, it is reasonable to address whether, in a well-meaning deference to outrage, the boundaries must be redrawn, and if so, how.

Perhaps most closely aligned with the farces here presented is the trouble that befell the Stanford law student Nicholas Wallace. On 25 January 2021, mere weeks after the attack on the U.S. Capitol of 6 January, Wallace emailed to his colleagues a satirical flier entitled "The Originalist Case for Insurrection" in which he skewered Senator Josh Hawley, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, and the Federalist Society. When Wallace found his graduation in jeopardy, the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education rose to his defense with an enshrined argument about free speech. Satire and parody are "neither intended nor understood as sincere statements of fact"; as such, they are "protected expression, not defamation" (Vigdor, "A Law Student"). Obviously, members of the Basoche could not have predicted anything remotely resembling electronic communication; they nonetheless took aim at various hegemonies by means of their era-appropriate equivalent of the mass media: the theater. In scores and scores of legalistic farces that make for a crash course on "how to do things with theater",[9] they explored and satirized their own legal jeopardy. Each time they relied on farce to act up and act out, they correlated the theory and practice of satire with the politics of pedagogy: a problem that is still very much alive.

Inside and outside the classroom, where this Introduction began, it turns out that satire is the original social justice warrior, regardless of whether its battles look much like ours. It can still fight the good fight, provided that we allow it to raise its many voices. And yet, that effort has been stymied by a particular brand of discomfort associated with its outsized scope. In my own classroom, for example, undergraduates frequently profess to feeling "excluded" from lawyerly in-jokes and "elitist" humor. They request that trigger warnings be injected into button-pushing media, for which any such list would be infinite. Some go so far as to shun rigorous debate about the material as a masculinist and ethnocentric exercise that has no place in the class-

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room.[10] There can be no denying the genuine distress that can be engendered by a bad joke. What has come to pass, however, is that, from individual hurt feelings—*this humor is not for me*—there issues a pseudological assertion that encapsulates Twitter outrage and brooks no refutation: *if this humor is not for me, then, it's not for us, and, therefore, it* should not *be for anyone*. Now substitute "art" for "humor." Now substitute "theater." And we all live unhappily ever after, resting on the laurels to which the enlightened rightly or wrongly feel entitled. End of story. Except for the fact that it's not.

The preference of one individual need not translate into the standard for all. A community need not be a mob, strain though we might—and nobly so—to hear each distinct voice therein. The more pressing concern is how it became one. When Basin denounced Norman judges who "determine cases according to the opinion of the majority of the spectators," he cited a biblical precedent against them—and in Latin no less: "For the Lord says in Exodus [23.2]: 'In judgment, you will not acquiesce to the opinion of the majority, so that [as a result] you deviate from the truth'" (*"Dicit enim Dominus in Exodo: 'Non acquiesces in judicio plurium sententiae, ut devies a vero'"*; *Histoire*, 61; *ROMD*, 40–43). In our own era, a different majority weighs in on the limits of humor not only for its users—satirists, teachers, artists, actors, comedians—but also for its receivers: readers, listeners, viewers, spectators. But here's the thing: there is no felony murder rule for comedy; there is no legal statute of accomplice liability that dictates, as it does in South Carolina, that "the hand of one is the hand of all." Nor need all comedy be judged by the same fluid "community standard" that the Supreme Court applied to pornography, as when notoriously sidestepping the issue in *Jacobellis v. Ohio* of 1964 (378 U.S. 184). They knew it when they saw it.

Notwithstanding the respect duly accorded to matters of personal taste and distaste, the collective response to humor need not automatically quash some artistic voices by substituting others in their place. There is an economics of performance too, of course, by which the offended can vote with their feet (real or virtual), withholding moral and/or financial support. But a self-driven, idiosyncratic umbrage need not apply to all because it applies to one. Instead, the theatrical strategies tendered by the satires of *Trial by Farce* might allow comedy to inflect and to be inflected by many voices. With an inquisitive eye on the past and a clairvoyant eye on the future, theater is a collective and collaborative medium. Even when it represents the effort of a single playwright, it is less about an author's (or authors') meaning(s) and more about the multiple subjectivities of multiple collaborators multiplied exponentially (*HD*, 17–18; *MBA*, 15–18). More than the sum of its parts, the rich

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and diverse life of the stage is best captured not by one but by many voices. As we shall see, it is in that sense that the translator's motto might well be a version of *e pluribus unum* that is not solely American. In an effort to recapture the many voices of theater, the translator (or translators) can raise but one voice on the shifting sands of context, hopeful that, in the future, the past will still matter. The lessons of both are decisive if we are to move forward in art or in life, in praise or in blame, as one or as many.

NOTES

1. See, e.g., Parsons and Jongenelen, *Comic Drama*; Happé and Streitman, *Urban Theatre*; and, also, for Spain, Dominguez, "*Pleyto del manto*."

2. See esp. Harvey's important *TB*, 8–35; *ROMD*, 129–34; for French-language sources, also Fabre, *Les Clercs*; and Bouhaïk-Gironès, *Les Clercs*.

3. For an image of Basochial justice, I can think of nothing finer than our cover art from the fifteenth-century French translation of Boccaccio's *Decameron,* in which a judge's britches are unceremoniously removed: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b7100018t# (from the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 5070 rés., fol. 287r; accessed 13 February 2022). The field is far too rich to do it justice; but I refer to Huizinga's seminal chapter, "Play and Law" (*Homo Ludens*, 76–88); and to the terrific collection edited by Brooks and Gewirtz, *Law's Stories*. For works on the medieval and early modern periods, see, in addition to *TB* and Bouhaïk-Gironès, *Les Clercs*; Bloch's *Medieval French Literature and Law*; Natalie Davis's exquisite *Fiction in the Archives* and *Return of Martin Guerre*; Green's *Crisis of Truth*; or Steiner and Barrington's collection, *The Letter of the Law*. Nor can we neglect the important work of such historians as, e.g., Beam, *Laughing Matters*; Hanawalt, "Whose Story?"; Horsley and Patterson, "Law and Literature in French Studies"; McDougall, *Bigamy* and *Royal Bastards*; Skoda, *Medieval Violence*; Butler, *Language of Abuse*; Stacey, *Dark Speech*; and edited collections such as Menuge's *Medieval Women and the Law* and Tracy's *Medieval and Early Modern Murder*.

4. For the most complete records of medieval performance in France, see Petit de Julleville, *RTC* and *LM*, 2: 1–216; plus, Rousse's amplification thereof in *TFFMA*, vol. 4.

5. In a book of primary sources like this, there is insufficient space to take up the vexed question of the fine distinctions between satire, parody, irony, and comedy, which has dogged theorists for centuries and which, for my money, still remains fundamentally unanswered.

6. For some examples from this series, see *FF*, 218, 278; *HD*, 58; 425–25; *ID*, 58; *MBA*, 39–40.

7. For actions taken against a *moralité*, see Lavéant, "Théâtre du Nord."

8. Steiner wrote extensively about this, e.g., in *Scandal*, introd. and chap. 4; for more recent interventions, see Pettit, "When Professors Offend Students"; and Landecker, "Weekly Briefing."

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9. Here, I channel the ordinary language philosopher J. L. Austin on the transactional or "performative" uses of language in which "the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action—it is not normally thought of as just saying something" (*How to Do Things with Words*, 6–7).

10. Suffice it to recall that this is the very premise of the vast field of feminist rhetoric in the law and beyond. For the generalist, an excellent place to start is, e.g., Royster and Kirsch, eds., *Feminist Rhetorical Practices* and Buchanan; and Ryan, eds., *Walking and Talking*.

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About This Translation

Le Mot Juste, L'Acte Juste

Betrayal. Fidelity. Infidelity. *Le mot juste. The right word.* In these legalistic plays, the translator's *mot juste* means considerably more than "just the *right word*." It must also mean the *righteous* word and the *just word*, albeit never just words. To begin with the very etymology of the word "translation," the French *traduire* (< Latin *traducere*) has always been of a piece with the law. To *traduire* was not only to "lead across" from one language to another. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it was to "remand" or to "hand over" an alleged criminal to the authorities, as well as to "belie" or "betray" what one might otherwise prefer to conceal. In other words, betrayal and appropriation belong to the very philology of translation. They likewise belong to the theater, an art form that has perpetually invited its consumers to *translate* its visions for the lived experience of the stage. What is more, each time those individuals do just that, they rightly (or wrongly, or righteously) appropriate theater's visions for themselves.

Perhaps they wish to betray, adapt, or reframe the original messaging, lest the philologically accurate translation of a word, action, or idea appear so *injuste* that it becomes unstageable. Recall, for instance, that I rejected one such *mot juste* in *The Jackass Conjecture*, where it would have yielded an ethnic slur (*HD*, 138–39). I similarly rejected an *acte juste* in *Extreme Husband Makeover* (*HD*, 354–57), where, in a post-Holocaust world, human beings would have been sent into an oven. Reluctant though the translator might be to appropriate, reverse, subvert, or betray, that is precisely what any director, actor, spectator, or reader of farce must do when dialoguing with a theatrical "text." Besides, if making new meaning of old sensibilities constitutes a betrayal, it is a betrayal that is suborned by a theatrical medium that has never been exclusively devoted to the word (or, for that matter, to the Word). The question is: If theater is, to some extent, translation (*ID*, 17–18) and, if translation is betrayal, then who is betraying whom? And is betrayal invariably a bad thing?

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Not necessarily. Not at the theater. Not if early comedy is to survive. Hard as we might try to reimagine and reframe the past, we cannot change it. We can only learn from it. That goes for language too. We can reject loaded terms that we have come to despise and do our best to alter their associated practices; but we cannot expunge them from the historical record lest we simultaneously efface the vexed contexts that gave rise to them.

Making sense of theater is different from making sense of the other arts. By that remark, in no way do I insinuate that translators of other literary forms are unaware of the subtle *linguistic* clues that guide understanding. Far from it. But it is very much to insist, as I do in "Burlesque Signs," that enacted performances call for further translations of all the nonlinguistic, visual, sonorous, and material components of stage action. André Tissier concurs, going so far as to assert that, in medieval French farce, so much room has been left for unscripted pantomime that "the text seems only a support; and what one could easily read inside of half an hour might well justify a performance of one hour" (*RF*, 1: 43). Meanwhile, Rob Henke emphasizes the paramountcy of mime in his work on the *commedia dell'arte*, where linguistic complexity is reinforced by an entire range of "shorthand indications: bowing, kneeling, saluting, brandishing, waving, kissing, and grimacing, the latter described in jargon that reflects the knowledge of an insider. . . ." (*Performance and Literature*, 191). It is no exaggeration to state that reading action between the lines is often what matters the most. As any theater practitioner knows full well, a play depends as much on what we see on the page as on what we don't see.

With or without an accompanying text, theater is a vision *of* and *for* action. To take a page from Longinus's book, it anticipates the move from image to speech, idea to embodiment, page to stage, thought to motion ("On the Sublime," 15.1–2; *ROMD*, 44–54). The unseen becomes seeable, the unimaginable imaginable, and the unstageable stageable (*ID*, 17–18). In a medium in which action regularly speaks louder than words, the translator is at pains to render not just the language on the page but the mimed action that it subtly or unsubtly cues for the stage. Indeed, if a script manages to communicate with us at all, it is because actors and translators—actors *as* translators—have filled in the blanks, interpreting implicit callouts for mime, gesture, music, dance, or movement. So too for the translator do a playwright's words function as callouts: they call out for a dramaturgy of the mind's eye.

The seventeenth-century philosopher Blaise Pascal famously wrote that "the eternal silence of the infinite spaces [of the heavens] terrifies me"

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(*Pensées*, 1670 ed., 2.206). That's as good a description as any of how the translator of theater might feel when, faced with the performative silence of the printed or virtual page, she endeavors to recuperate the long-lost traces of meanings and ephemera. But silence doesn't always mean what we think it does. Nor, in a set of legalistic comedies revived for the #MeToo era and beyond, does it necessarily denote consent to misogyny. Quite to the contrary, silence can—and *should*—speak volumes in comedy, where it can actually translate into something extraordinary. In practice, the terrifying silence of the theatrical page metamorphoses into a space of boundless artistic creativity and potentiality.

In theater, there is no single *mot juste*. Nor is there a single *acte juste* or *geste juste* for "just the right stage action." There are only multiple *performances justes*, all to be overseen lest they become so *injustes* as to defy postmedieval staging. In that respect, it is feasible, desirable, and ethical that the feminist translator betray faithfully a problematic moral of a farcical story—and that she do so in such a way as to facilitate a new understanding and appreciation of outmoded humor that can nonetheless ring true today. In *Wife Swap*, I conjured a queer ending that filled in the blanks of the impossibly open-ended dialogue by replacing the subjection of women with a pantomimic vision of their empowerment (*HD*, 278–79). In *Confession Follies*, I gave a relentlessly manipulated chambermaid some physical agency (*ID*, #5). It is my philosophy that, when faced with medieval sexism, classism, and ethnocentrism, the translator may create principled, adapted, stage-friendly translations that are simultaneously *faithful and unfaithful: reimagined but no less philologically accurate*. And that turns out to be a very good thing for comedy.

Ideally with a sense of humor, she will investigate and recover what is literally lost in translation. She will then invite others to weigh in on whether or not it *should be* lost or whether it can, in fact, be refound. A true translation, a *traduction engagée* (*HD*, 20–22), can keep the medieval misogyny intact while concomitantly contesting it; it can acknowledge (if not accept) the survival of jokes that are no longer to our taste. In that way, it can be faithful to the very move that theater has eternally urged: to create and recreate through performative acts of translation. Theater, I submit, never retains an original meaning: its creators intend for it to change and adapt, to be changed and adapted. For better or for worse, their standing invitation endows us, individually and collectively, with an awesome artistic power to make and to remake meaning for art and for life.

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Translational Politics and the Politics of Translation

Whether the setting be a classroom, a courtroom, a house of worship, or a stage, voices are always raised in a specific context (recuperable or irrecuperable), regardless of who speaks or who hears. Believe it or not, translation in the Middle Ages was viewed as a kind of legal safehouse: the very safehouse to which actors laid claim in their *envois* ("Introd.," note 6). So said one Maître David Chambellan of Parliament on 4 March 1490 when answering charges that he had defamed two colleagues. In his reply to the royal prosecutor Jean Lemaistre, Chambellan invoked the significant precedent of Saint Jerome (d. 420), the storied translator of the Vulgate or Latin Bible who had once been "accused of heresy for having translated Greek into Latin" (*Monseigneur saint Jerosme qui fut accusé de heresie pour ce qu'il avoit translaté de grec en latin*).[1] It was a prescient argument in which Chambellan compared the office of the lawyer to that of both the teacher and the translator on the following basis: all three occupations owed a sacred duty to truth-telling and to good faith, which duty then insulated them from legal liability. A lawyer was but a "translator;" and, as the "interpreter" and exegete of words and actions, he could not be held liable for verbal offenses uttered in a voice that, technically speaking, was not his own. Seen in that light, he was rather like Quintilian's first-century actor who literally and metaphorically *represented* his clients by dramatically impersonating them (*Institutio oratoria*, 6.234–35; *ROMD*, 54–68).

Four days later on 8 March, Chambellan elaborated: "there are those who would maintain that a lawyer is a translator [or interpreter]" (*aucuns veulent maintenir que ung advocat est interpretateur*). The lawyer, he testified, ought to enjoy still greater latitude than either the teacher or the translator-interpreter who speaks "for someone who does not understand the language to whom the interpreter is speaking" (*ung interpretateur . . . parle pour aucun qui n'entend le langaige ouquel un interpretateur parle* [426; his ellipsis]). But, whereas "the translator could contrive to deceive his listener" (*l'interpretateur le pourroit decevoir*), the barrister had sworn a solemn oath to tell the truth (*les advocatz sont pour dire verité*). In the service of that truth, he was authorized to "say anything that serves the case" (*les advocatz pevent dire tout ce qui leur sert à leur cause*). Ergo, it would be unjust to reprimand such a duly appointed advocate for so doing.

Well worth emphasizing in this remarkable account is Chambellan's unflagging defense of a foundational right that he trumpets with the full force and authority of the Latin language: "a lawyer must have freedom of speech" (*aussi ung advocat debet habere liberam licentiam dicendi* [430]).[2] Suffice it to say that, any time the 1400s seem to exhibit a more liberal or nuanced view of

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free speech than the 2020s, we're in trouble. One would hope that good-faith actors in trials, translation, and theater might enjoy similar protections in postmedieval times (*MBA*, 38–42). One would also hope that any good-faith translation of farce's biting, politically incorrect satires might be granted its own equivalent of poetic license. And yet, in our hyperpoliticized world, the selfsame politics that threaten to suppress laughter ("Introd.") now threaten the act of translation, with translators themselves in the crosshairs.

Case in point: the translator's very right to speak has come under fire. After Junior Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman dazzled her audience with a performance of "The Hill We Climb" at the Presidential Inauguration of Joseph R. Biden, her poem proved so moving to so many that translations into multiple languages sprang forth immediately. But could a white man translate a Black woman's art into Catalan? Could a white woman translate it into Dutch (Berger, "White Translator Removed")? Apparently not. For some, no matter how distinguished the translator, there was no circumstance under which the multivocality and contextualization so central to artistic expression could be accommodated.

Art is born of a distinct cultural moment and of the politics of that moment. That goes without saying. But moments change. Even if we agree that all translation is, to some extent, an appropriative and political act (Woods, *Censoring Translation*, 8–29), not all translational voicing need be appropriative in a politically sinister way. If you're reading my book, perhaps you think that it's okay for a woman to translate and reappropriate all the misogyny of the *farceurs*. Must a translator draw the line at race? At class? At gender? At ethnicity? At content? If it is the mission of farce to break boundaries ("Introd."), it is reasonable that the translation of that art form resist definitive lines in the sand. As Shadi Bartsch put it eloquently in her plea that we salvage ancient masterpieces no longer to our taste, in translation as in art, at stake is the immortal power of interpretation: "literature doesn't do things by itself. *We* make meaning with a text, we don't simply absorb it or somehow get stained by it." Whence, her advocacy of "a middle path [that] is available between avoiding such works entirely and endorsing a racist and sexist set of values: namely, *interpretation*."[3] Interpretation in action is the business of theater and the funny business of farce.

Having expounded my overall theory and practice of translation both here and over three earlier volumes, I'll confine the remainder of this section to the recapitulation of some key principles. As before, when referring to the plays and their dramatis personae, I use the titles and the names that I have

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bestowed on them. All translations of primary and secondary sources are mine unless otherwise indicated, as for Donald Frame's terrific *Complete Works of Francois Rabelais* (*CWFR*).

The Language of Farce

This book *contains language*. I would be unable to translate these farces without it. But it might not be the kind of language you're thinking, although it contains that too. Accompanying the signature profanity are the "Jeez," the "Christ in the bucket," the "Holy moly," or the swearing by every saint (real and imaginary) in the book, for which there actually *is* a book. Sinners, saints, and average Joes or Jo-Jos have been scrupulously cataloged by Jacques Merceron in his *Dictionnaire thématique et géographique des saints imaginaires* (*DSI*), a godsend for the comprehension of their each and every name. You'll thus have truck here with Saint Jezebel for Sainte Brague or Saint Moritz for Saint Mor (and, no, that's not the ski resort).

Additionally, farce revels in archaism and anachronism at the same time that it eschews any consistent linguistic register: "Golly, gee whillickers, husband, why did you fuck me up the ass?" (*FF*, 33). Its very hallmark is sophisticated wordplay that spotlights the disconnect between highbrow and lowbrow, elegant and grotesque. Instead, it favors the elegantly grotesque and the grotesquely elegant, the stupidly intellectual and the intellectually stupid. For that reason, there is no need to repel bizarre or outdated expressions (*ID*, 18–20). For one thing, you can update them ("Note to Actors"); for another thing, we're quite accustomed to a "hark" or an "alas" in Homer or Shakespeare, right? Why not in comedy? It's language. It's here today, gone tomorrow, and it can poke fun at its own outmodedness. The frank vernacular of the farcical idiom is as gleefully tethered to the learned and popular culture of its day as is the irksome *Urban Dictionary* to ours. Whence my recourse to my local popular culture: primarily American TV, music, comedy, or musical comedy, all evolving as I write. I hear our characters with American accents and slang; your own ear will dictate something else. But whatever you hear, a word-for-word translation will not do (*ID*, 20). Not if this repertoire is to live on.

Legal Players and Legalese

Disorder in the court! Make way for cast upon cast of time-dishonored players, one and all: policemen and detectives; witnesses and process servers;

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litigants and complainants; prosecutors and defense attorneys; bailiffs and court recorders; judges and juries (*ROMD*, 77–89). The world was their stage, the men and women in it, merely legal players—and a motley crew of them at that. Also at their side before the law are the butchers, the bakers, the candlestick makers, and all manner of merchants, cobblers, deadbeats, and "little people" (*FF*, 4–13). They were identifiable in a flash, especially the lawyers sporting their cherished furry hats (*ROMD*, 135–41). Clothes made the man, you see, even when farce's women wore the pants; and costume signaled identity, much as it does in present-day Britain each time a barrister dons wig and gown (Crane, *Performance of Self*, 10–29; Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 77).

Needless to say, jurisprudence varies tremendously across time, space, and region, a phenomenon that posed major challenges to translation. The Basochial take on everything from due process to property rights to debt collection had to be legible to American audiences and, with a few adjustments, to Anglophones worldwide living under other legal systems. Ditto for all the lawyerly in-jokes that, no longer for the *cognoscente* alone, had to look outward toward a very different public. In opting for a more universalizing legal idiom, I've been as faithful as possible to the ultra-specialized precepts of ancient, medieval, and modern jurisprudence;[4] but be advised that neither the venues nor the dramatis personae of the upcoming procedural comedies will match their twenty-first-century counterparts exactly. Nor will their idiosyncratic legalese.

Consider the traveling judge. No staid figure behind the bench, he is so busy arbitrating in far-flung jurisdictions that he never goes anywhere without his trusty writing desk: the portable escritoire of *Who's Your Daddy?* (#5) and *Johnny Slowpoke* (#11). Or take the all-purpose *sergent*, whose duties in *Default Judgment Day* (#2) encompass process server, beat cop, marshal, desk sergeant, and bailiff. Or take the practitioner of *Johnny Slowpoke* who has his finger in so many pots that even the Judge questions his concurrent service as cop, marshal, priest, lawyer, and prosecutor (*ATF*, 2: 22). As for their legalese, you will also bear witness to bizarre oath-taking, garbled legal formulas, and corrupt citations, all delivered in farce's trademark "kitchen Latin" (*latin de cuisine*). But nowhere is the cultural chasm more daunting than when it comes to venue.

As the presumed authors of the majority of the extant farces, the Basochiens had trained in civil, canon, and customary law, finding rich fodder therein for their comic and serious dramatic efforts.[5] What gives their satire its bite, however, is the very thing that risks eluding contemporary audiences: the frequently contested jurisdictional purview of the civil vs. the ecclesiastical judge, who both presided over a laundry list of moral and criminal

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delicts. Those distinctions would have been as second nature to the Basochiens as, say, those between such sovereign U.S. courts as civil, criminal, federal, military, or Native American. In the clashes memorialized by *Trial by Farce*, predominantly related to marriage and inheritance, the proper legal venue is likewise dependent on the nature of the offense and the status of the aggrieved party, entity, or institution. But have no fear! With any necessary discussion of specifics to be addressed later in the Production Notes for each play, the good news for anyone cowed by the intricacies of premodern law is that any ignorance on our part is regularly mirrored by that of farce's characters themselves. That explains my reliance on garden-variety legal turns of phrase such as the Miranda warning, the boilerplate of wills and contracts, and all those objections with which I opened the Introduction.

Editions and Printed Sources

This book hosts farces from all four of the premier medieval-Renaissance French collections (*Recueils*), described below for those joining us *in medias res*. In addition, I've welcomed as our entr'acte *Beauballs* (#6) from Ms. 25 of the Berne Library plus, as our finale, *Runaway Groom* (#12), a book published in Paris in 1632. As for those four *Recueils*, they are, with one probable exception, *recueils factices* or "pseudocollections." The French use that term when designating a group of plays that were printed separately but later bound together, usually in the sixteenth century. Five of our farces are from the *Recueil du British Museum* (*RBM*): *Not Gettin' Any* (#1), *Default Judgment Day* (#2), *The Washtub* (#3), *Who's Your Daddy?* (#5), and *Talking Turkey* (#8); three hail from the *Recueil La Vallière* (*RLV*): *Poor Bastards* (#7), *Witless Protection* (#10), and *Johnny Slowpoke* (#11); two are from the *Recueil Cohen* (*RC*) or, as Jelle Koopmans rechristened it, the *Recueil de Florence* (*RFlorence*): *Basket Case* (#4) and a second version of *Talking Turkey* (#8); and one is from the *Recueil Trepperel* (*RT*): *Okay, Cupid* (#9). All four *Recueils* preserve plays that are thought to predate substantially their dates of compilation.[6] All four have been edited; three have been digitized for online perusal (all except for the *RT*); and two are available in printed facsimile editions (the *RBM* and the *RLV*).[7]

The *Recueil du British Museum*, published between 1540 and 1550 and associated with the city of Lyon, houses sixty-four plays, the lion's share of which are farces (*RF*, 5: 163–66). They were first edited by Anatole de Montaiglon for Viollet le Duc's ten-volume *Ancien Théâtre françois* (1854–57), and my

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references to the Middle French tend to be from that easily consultable edition. There are no verse numbers in the *ATF*; so, I cite it by volume and page number only. I've also had occasion to refer to Émile Mabille's two-volume, philologically refreshed reedition (1873–93) of the *ATF*: the *Choix de farces, soties et moralités des XV^e^ et XVI^e^ siècles* (*CFSM*).

The *Recueil La Vallière* is Norman in inspiration, and its contents are often localized in or near the city of Rouen, home to the joyously riotous society of *farceurs* known as the Conards.[8] Dating from around 1535 to 1545 and, per Tissier, copied in 1575 or thereabouts, the *RLV* groups together seventy-four plays, forty-eight of them farces (*RF*, 1: 17). It was edited in 1837 (without verse numbers) by Antoine Le Roux de Lincy and Francisque Michel in their four-volume *Recueil de farces, moralités et sermons joyeux* (*RFMSJ*) which, unfortunately, is not paginated continuously across volumes. I cite from the *RFMSJ* by volume number and local page number only. Equally unfortunate: the digitized version of the *RLV* (BNF, Ms. 24341) is of poor quality compared to the printed facsimile edition. But highly fortunate: our knowledge of the *RLV* has been advanced considerably by Estelle Doudet and Mario Longtin, who recalculated the date of its compilation at approximately 1570 and rejected its status as a *recueil factice*. Far from being a haphazard pseudocollection, they argued persuasively, the *RLV* belied a spirit of organization and a "will to order." For Doudet and Longtin, the plays were arranged not by chronology and not by theatrical genre but, as is deducible from the Middle French Table of Contents, by the number of actors required to perform them: "*S'ensuyt les farces et moralités qui sont en ce livre tant a un, deulx, troys, quatre, cinq, six et sept personnages. . . .*" ("*Le Recueil de Rouen*," 301). That said, I decline to take up their call to redub the *Recueil La Vallière* the *Recueil de Rouen*. On one hand, it is nearly impossible to obtain a copy of their article in the US. On the other hand, any bibliographic search for the *Recueil de Rouen* is unlikely to lead researchers to the massive critical literature on the *Recueil La Vallière*.

With fifty-three plays all called *farces*, the *Recueil Cohen* was first edited by Gustave Cohen in 1949 as *Recueil de Farces françaises inédites du XVe siècle* (*RC*), after which the original disappeared. Some fifty years later, Jelle Koopmans relocated and reedited that lost original, which we now believe was printed in Paris by the same family of printers responsible for the *Recueil Trepperel* (Bouhaïk-Gironès, *Les Clercs*, 323). He renamed it the *Recueil de Florence* (*RFlorence*) and posited that it was printed in two installments during the first quarter of the sixteenth century between roughly 1504–21 and 1512–21 (*RFlorence*, 7; 15).[9] And there's something else about the *Recueil Cohen* which, notwithstanding a certain medievalist propensity for renaming, is the title I

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prefer to retain. It hit bookshelves long after our initial formative impressions of farce had taken hold, particularly with regard to length. We typically think of farces as short plays, with the *Pathelin* standing out as the striking outlier at over 1,500 verses. It's true enough that there are many farces on the order of 200–400 verses. And yet, in the *RC*, it is not uncommon to come across plays that exceed 600, 700, or 800 verses. *Confession Lessons*, for example, clocks in at 616 verses (*RC*, #2; *FF*, #3) and *Confessions of a Medieval Drama Queen* at 632 (*RC*, #46; *ID*, #4); while the *Farce du Pasté* (*RC*, #19) and the *Farce du Pourpoint rétréci* (*RC*, #44) boast a whopping 767 and 879 verses respectively.

The fourth collection, the *Recueil Trepperel* (*RT*), is comprised of thirty-five plays, of which five are farces. Printed in Paris between 1509 and 1521 by the Trepperel family, this collection of dramatic texts plausibly belonged to an early-sixteenth-century Parisian acting troupe (Koopmans, "Un chacun," 148; Bouhaïk-Gironès, *Les Clercs*, 227; 322). It was edited by another towering figure in medieval studies, Eugénie Droz, who published its contents in two volumes: the *Recueil Trepperel: Les Sotties* (1935) and the *Recueil Trepperel: Les Farces* (1961). The latter volume (*RTLF*), in which our *Okay, Cupid* appears (#9), was produced in collaboration with Halina Lewicka.

Three of our plays were also published in 1612 by Nicolas Rousset, whose work spotlights the endurance of medieval farce on the eve of Molière. Of the seven plays of his *Recueil de plusieurs Farces, tant anciennes que modernes* (hereafter, "Rousset"), you will find reeditions of *Default Judgment Day* (#2), *Talking Turkey* (#8), and *Okay, Cupid* (#9). The entire editorial conversation has resonated ever since. At the turn of the nineteenth century (1798–1806), Pierre Siméon Caron republished all seven of Rousset's offerings in the eleven-volume *Collection de différents ouvrages anciens, poésies et facéties* (hereafter, *Collection*). Those reeditions were then republished in Paris (1872–73) by Charles Brunet in his *Recueil de plusieurs farces* (*RPF*). Next came Edouard Fournier in 1862 with *Le Théâtre français avant la Renaissance* (*TFR*); and, in 1983, Michel Rousse moved the conversation forward significantly with his unpublished *thèse d'État*, the five-volume masterpiece, *Le Théâtre des farces en France au Moyen Âge* (*TFFMA*). For my money, things reached an apogee between 1986 and 2000 with Tissier's thirteen-volume *Recueil de farces (1450–1550)*, a tour-de-force edition of sixty-five farces, all of which he later translated into modern French in the four-volume *Farces françaises de la fin du Moyen Âge* (*FFMA*). Bernard Faivre followed up with his own two-volume *Les Farces* (1997–99), featuring facing modern French translations (our #3, *The Washtub* among them [1: 67–120]). And the most recent interlocutor is the ingenious and indefatigable Thierry Martin, a model of scholarly generosity who, as of the time of this writing, had posted 121 superbly annotated editions

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online in *Sotties et Farces du XVe et du XVIe siècle* (*SFQS*). Publishing under the playful pseudonym of "Maître Antitus," he updates this invaluable resource so systematically and so copiously that my references to its introductions and endnotes will doubtless be outdated by the time you check them out at https://sottiesetfarces.wordpress.com/about/ (all my dates of access are 9 March 2021 unless otherwise indicated). Rest assured that, if an edition or translation could be located for these dozen plays, I've reviewed it but, as before, only after finalizing my travails.

If you read modern French, do have a look at the supremely helpful plot summaries by Petit de Julleville in *Répertoire du Theâtre Comique* of 1886 (*RTC*) and by Faivre in his deliciously witty *Répertoire* (hereafter, *Répertoire*). Just be forewarned that, in the *RTC*, there is no discussion of the plays from the yet-to-be published *Recueil Cohen* or *Recueil Trepperel*. A similar issue obtains for Faivre, whose *Répertoire* of 1993 came out while Tissier was still laboring on his *Recueil de Farces*. I'll also give you a taste here and there of the summaries of the *RBM* plays penned by the oft-scandalized Octave Joseph Delepierre in his *Description et analyse d'un livre unique qui se trouve au Musée britannique* of 1849 (*DLU*; *FF*, 416n).

Finally, six of our plays have been translated into modern French: *Not Gettin' Any* (#1), *The Washtub* (#3), *Who's Your Daddy?* (#5), *Talking Turkey* (#8), *Witless Protection* (#10), and *Runaway Groom* (#12). To my knowledge, only one has been translated into English, and several times at that: the beloved *Washtub*. Details are to come in the corresponding Production Notes but I deemed a renewal in order. Per my earlier calculations and, now including the selections of *Trial by Farce*, Anglophones can enjoy 59 of some 200 farces extant.[10] And counting.

So, please: join the conversation yourself. Regardless of a farce's provenance, it is primed to engage with other farces and with us. Try experimenting with a double- or triple bill where *Beauballs* (#6) talks turkey, as it were, with *Talking Turkey* (#8). Let marriage—or the lack thereof—be the theatrical focus of your soirée of *Okay, Cupid* (#9) and *Runaway Groom* (#12). Team up the poor bastards of *Who's Your Daddy?* (#5) with *Poor Bastards* (#7). Or revel in the three bona fide courtroom dramas of *Okay, Cupid* (#9), *Witless Protection* (#10), and *Johnny Slowpoke* (#11) until you get laughed out of court.

Critical Apparatus, Stage Directions, and Composite Editions

More than ever, it is my editorial position that these twelve farces must be accessible to—and performable by—those who read neither Middle French

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nor modern French. You'll sample the Middle French every now and then with a link to such an edition as the online *SFQS*, which reduces the need for massive excerpts in the endnotes. I'll also have resolved abbreviations, regularized the spelling of characters' names, replaced an archaic "j" with "i," corrected silently such minor transcription errors as "Paris" for "Parys," and added the occasional diacritical when the meaning is unambiguous: the preposition *à* might receive its *accent grave*, a *c*, its cedilla, or a naked *e*, its *accent aigu* (*é*). I've retained some of the Middle French onomatopoeia too for laughter, snickering, or shouting: *hon, hon, hon, hy, hy, hy, hen! hen! hen!* And there will have been minor adjustments to various Middle French titles and subtitles. Inclined though I am to transcribe those appellations, warts and all, the variants can be off-putting: *Johnny Slowpoke*, for instance, is a *Farce Joyeuse a sis pesonnage* (*sic*).

As announced in the Foreword, the mission of my seriously foreshortened critical apparatus is to get actors on their feet and to get directors, dramaturges, and new readers or researchers started. To that end, I've asked myself this question repeatedly: *What is the minimum needed by those studying theater history, conducting literary analysis, mounting a farce, or crafting program notes for a playbill?* As best I could, I've answered it like so, with *one or two titles in the English language*. I also cite a lot of my previous work—sorry about that—principally for its extensive bibliographies that will facilitate deeper dives into the material. Even though the present Works Cited is limited to a small selection of crucial secondary sources, those limitations ought in no way to imply any lack of familiarity or respect on my part for the distinguished scholarship of European *littéraires*. It is, rather, that the anticipated Anglophone audience of *Trial by Farce* is not expected to read French or to track down arcane sources in foreign languages.

As in my past volumes, you will encounter three types of brackets: square, curly, and angle. Any original Middle French stage directions appear italicized and unbracketed, the most usual one being the *entre* that customarily accompanies a character's first words and that equates to *begins, speaks*, or *enter Character X* (*RF*, 2: 95n). But, in light of the relative paucity of didascalia in general, I have once again crafted, within square brackets, wide-ranging dramaturgical guidance. Curiously enough, for all its mouthing off, our repertoire is notoriously taciturn when it comes to stage directions that spell out exactly what is to be done. Naturally, there are exceptions, as with the painstaking didascalic detail for the female street performer of *La Fille bastelierre* (*RLV*, #1): *Here, she gets down off her stool and takes her magic wand in hand and does a trick or two. Then, she takes a dog dressed up in a colorful fabric, and speaks*

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the following words. . . . (*Icy dévalle de dessus la sécabelle, et prent unne verge en sa main et faict ung tour ou deulx. Et prent ung chien vestu de quelque toylle de coulleur, et dict ce qui ensuyct. . . .*) (*RFMSJ*, 1.1; *SFQS*: https://sottiesetfarces.wordpress.com/2018/12/15/la-fille-bastelierre/). You will thus discover much square bracketing for such situations as these: nonspeaking characters who supplement a cast of characters; action or set design; scene breaks; my best guess at what might be missing before or after an orphaned rhyme; a clarification of a now-obscure reference; the setup for a joke that must cross cultures; a solution for unpalatable violence (as in the *comédie-ballet* of #3, *The Washtub*); and so on. Within those bracketed interpolations, curly brackets mark further stage directions; and yet more bracketing occurs with the angle brackets of my three composite editions for *Default Judgment Day* (#2), *Talking Turkey* (#8), and *Okay, Cupid* (#9). For those three farces, the 1612 Rousset reedition is so illuminating that I've integrated his lessons into my translations, the better to acknowledge a play's many lives. And, within those angle brackets, you will find the same square and curly brackets described above. I'm aware that this format can look jarringly like cut-and-paste on the printed page, but I assure you that it won't sound that way.

Money Math

Offensively expensive? Farcically cheap? Under the best of circumstances, the value of medieval coins proves exceptionally challenging to translate and, if we know nothing else by now, it's that farce does not gravitate toward the best of circumstances. The handy tables in Peter Spufford's *Money and Its Use in Medieval Europe* (397–410) and Marie-Thérèse Boyer-Xambeu's *Private Money and Public Currencies* (114–15) remain bona fide treasures for any such endeavor but, as one might expect, when money changes hands in farce, things get messy. In an excellent doctoral dissertation, Matthew Jon Pagett postulates that the early modern French theater provided a venue for "publicly examining and showing the societal changes which accompanied monetary evolution." For Pagett, evolving currencies and financial instruments conveyed the status of money as "a power equalizer between people of different classes: servants could outsmart and out-earn their masters" ("Money Plays," 14). His is a fresh approach; and, for anybody not steeped in economic history, his first chapter, "Coin Matters: Money in Comic Theater Until the Late Renaissance" (24–81), is exceedingly instructive. The crucial question of the relative value of costs, fees, and fines, however, is no less perplexing.

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A logical point of departure for medieval France is this trio of coins in silver, gold, or copper: the *livre*, the *sou*, and the *denier* (1 *livre* = 20 *sous* = 240 *deniers*). As Tissier recalls in a summary based on the retired French franc: a *denier* was worth one-twelfth of a *sou*; a gold *ducat*, ten to twelve *francs*; an *écu ordinaire*, about three *francs* or three *livres*; and both the *franc* and the *livre* (or *livre tournois*) were equal to twenty *sous* (*RF*, 6: 449; 150n).[11] Meanwhile, Pagett explains that "the main unit of account was the ubiquitous *livre*" (12 *deniers*), which was "just for keeping accounts—there was no one-*livre* coin." Instead, it was the word *franc* that typically denoted one *livre* ("Money Plays," 9). Between 1360 and 1641, moreover, the coins minted as 1 *livre tournois* were called *francs* as well; and, in 1577, these were supplanted by the primary coin in circulation in France until the Revolution: the gold crown or *écu* (also minted in silver).

For his own part, Daniel Lord Smail elects to broach the question of currency conversion by recalculating in terms of the florin, the "dollar of the Middle Ages." In *Legal Plunder*, a compelling study of debt collection in fourteenth-century Marseille and Lucca, he reports that, in Marseille, the florin varied in value between 26 and 31 *sous* (xiii–xv). More importantly, Smail underscores that "there is no easy way to convert florins into modern currencies such as the U.S. dollar. If you use minimum wages as the basis for the exchange rate, then the florin was worth about $400 to $500. . . . But if you use linens or foodstuffs rather than wage rates as the basis for currency conversion, then the florin was worth much less compared to the dollar, largely because the industrial production of such commodities has drastically reduced their prices relative to wages" (xiv). From that perspective, the value of the florin might range from anywhere between five and thirty dollars, with workers earning six to eight cents an hour. But the disconnect is not surprising, avers Smail, because "human labor in the Middle Ages was cheap, food was dear, and the price of cloth exorbitant" (103). For the literary historian, this is research of the highest order that sheds welcome and specific light on something like the *Pathelin*'s plot-driving cost per yard of fabric. But, if we are to envisage a 500-dollar tablecloth, then just how exorbitant are farce's legal payoffs? Ripoffs might well lie in the eye of the beholder.

When translating premodern currencies, I adhere to the schema that I established earlier for *écus*, *ducats*, *francs*, *livres*, *sous*, and *deniers* (per the list below). New to my farce series are *agnels*, *pistolles*, *maravadís*, *testons*, *lyards* (or *liards*), and the ultimate pittance, the *mersis*.

The gold *agnel*, *angel*, or *mouton d'or*, so named for the Paschal lamb depicted on the obverse (as in *agnus Dei*), was in circulation from the thir-

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teenth through the fifteenth centuries. At approximately 6 *sous* and 8 *deniers*, the *agnel* shall be about a buck and a half. (You can see one here: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b7700432x.)

The militaristic-sounding *pistolle* was of Spanish origin (the double *escudo*), although it may share an etymon with the Czech *píšťala* or "hand cannon," the latter of which we saw in *Bro Job* (*ID*, 200). Known in France after 1537, the *pistolle* was a Spanish coin "used almost always to designate an amount of 10 *livres*" ("Money Plays," 9). Alternatively dubbed the French guinea, the doubloon, and, subsequently, the *louis d'or*, the gold *pistolle* more than doubled in value in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries ("Money Plays," 9). For our purposes, it will equate to 200 to 300 USD.

Also present: the *maravedi*, the name assigned to various Iberian coins of gold and, later, of silver, which were minted between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries. These were more or less the equivalent of a French *denier*, or about a dime.

The silver *teston*—that's right: sounds like *tit*—was worth 10 *sous* or about $10.

The *grand blanc* amounted to about 13 *deniers* but, in other contexts, it represented the going rate for whores on the ground floor of a bordello.[12]

As for the truly small change, the *liard* was valued at one quarter of a *sou* or about 25 cents (a quarter or two bits); and the *mersi*, which expressed more spiritual than financial gratitude, was hardly worth counting as pennies.

Now joining my previous conversions (*FF*, 38–43; *HD*, 25–27; *ID*, 32–33) is this historically proportional translation of farcical finance in USD amounts, to roughest approximation and in descending order:

1 *pistolle* = $200–$300
1 gold *ducat* = 10–12 *francs* or $200 USD
1 gold *écu* = $100[13]
1 *livre* (or *livre tournois*) = $20
1 *franc* = $20
1 *teston* = $10
1 *agnel* = $1.50
Le grand blanc = $1.30
1 *sou* = $1
1 *liard* = 25 cents or a quarter
1 *denier* = 10 cents or a dime
1 *marabes* or *maravédis* = 10 cents or a dime
1 *poujoyse* = one quarter of a *denier* = 2 cents
1 *mersi* = 1 cent

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Prose, Verse, and Music

Rhyming octosyllabic couplets are the *lingua franca* of farce, and I sometimes preserve them in rhymed or free verse, all the while renewing my caveat that I render doggerel as doggerel. Likewise for the slapstick repetitiveness of the *rondeau triolet*—the song-and-dance routine associated with characters' comings and goings, notably at scene breaks (*FF*, 48)—or for any opening songs that might conceivably have served to quiet the audience (as in #3, *The Washtub* [*RF*, 3: 40n]). Versification helps to capture a given character too, especially in the more musical farces of the *Recueil Cohen*. In *Basket Case* (#4), for instance, I assign discrete rhyme schemes befitting discrete personalities as I did in *Confessions of a Medieval Drama Queen* (*ID*, #4; *RC*, #4). Also of import for its myriad performance possibilities: what the musicologist Leo Treitler identified as the lack of terminological distinction in the Middle Ages between *chanter* and *dire*, speaking and singing ("Oral, Written, and Literate Process"). You'll see the phenomenon in action in *Default Judgment Day* (#2), when "*The Husband and the Neighbor speak in song*" (Rousset, 109) or when the protagonists of *Okay, Cupid* (#9) invoke both *chanter* and *dire* for their own *chanson* (*RT*, 48; v. 224). Otherwise, the translation of song is nothing if not fraught.

As is borne out by the quickest perusal of Howard Mayer Brown's pioneering *Music in the French Secular Theater* (*MFST*) or Emma Dillon's *Medieval Music-Making*, music is so essential to farce that no translation can do without it. Nor can any translation do without the proper legal deference to twenty-first-century copyright protections. Consequently, when a farce calls for a lyric that actors might wish to sing, I venture a rough translational equivalent that I flag throughout with the copyright symbol. (Do note that you will *not* see that symbol when lyrics are mentioned in passing in discursive sections such as the Production Notes, where they cannot be construed as callouts for performance. Unless, of course, you're singing my observations aloud for a price!) As in my other volumes, this is a process complex enough to warrant another "Appendix: Scholarly References to Copyrighted Materials," where I supply information about known copyright holders for each and every song so ventured.

One last caveat: music speaks the language of popular culture; popular culture speaks the language of music. At least we don't owe Neil Sedaka any money if we tell a partner that "breaking up is hard to do." Consistent with oral performance traditions, though, a musical catchphrase can enter a language so completely that we no longer recognize its origins in a song. It's a

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safe bet that I'll have missed a lyric or two in Middle French and even in modern English. In all other respects, I've erred on the side of a distinctly unfarcical excess of caution in order to honor a body of laws that had no real medieval analog: intellectual property. To come full circle, it's all about good faith.

NOTES

1. A.N. X1a, 4831, fol. 386, 4 March 1490, Pièce 25; cited by Delachenal, *Histoire des avocats*, 425–26. See also *ROMD*, 153–55. While Jerome of Stridon was not canonized until 1767 by Pope Clement XIII, he was a venerated medieval Father of the Church, honorifically dubbed "Saint."

2. A.N. X1a, 4831, 8 March, fols. 386v–388; cited by Delachenal, 425–26.

3. "Don't Yield Ancient Literature and History to the Alt-Right"; her emphases. The title of Bartsch's opinion piece was changed several hours later to "Why I Won't Surrender the Classics to the Far Right." While my focus is not on translation studies per se, readers are sure to find of great interest the coauthored introduction by Bigliazzi, Kofler, and Ambrosi to their *Theatre Translation in Performance*, esp. 1–13.

4. Among the myriad legal works I consulted, these were especially helpful: https://www.dictionnaire-juridique.com; https://www.law.berkeley.edu/research/the-robbins-collection/exhibitions/medieval-law-school/ (accessed 20 November 2020); and the works of the Flemish scholar Joos de Damhouder (1507–1581), who was clearly read in France under his Gallicized name, "de Dahmoudère," among them the *Practique Et Enchiridion Des Causes Criminelles* (1554) and the *Practique Judiciaire* (1572).

5. The playwright André de la Vigne, for instance, authored two farces and a mystery play that were performed in Seurre in 1496 (*PF*, 113–18). In the European Middle Ages, the *Digest*, the *Code*, and the *Institutes* of Justinian served as a kind of legal pantheon, passing down the principles of Roman civil law. That triumvirate of texts informed medieval civil procedure much as Gratian's twelfth-century *Decretum* did canon law (above, note 4).

6. For more information about these four collections, see the "ABT" sections of my previous volumes and, if you read French, *RTC*, 3–15; *RF*, 1: 15–19; Faivre, *Répertoire*, 9–28; *RFlorence*, 7–16; Droz, *RT*, xi–xiv; and the homepage of *SFQS* at https://sottiesetfarces.wordpress.com/about/

7. All accessed on 13 March 2021, see, e.g., for the *RBM:* https://archive.org/details/ancienthtref01violuoft; for the *RLV*: http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b90631556/f1.image.r=24341%20Valli%C3%A8re; and, for the *RC*: https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.medievalacademy.org/resource/resmgr/maa_books_online/cohen_0047.htm. Tissier gives full details about each manuscript or printed source (*RF*, 1: 15–19) as well as all modern French translations thereof (*RF*, 1: 19–22). See also Faivre, *Répertoire*, 9–28; Koopmans, introd., *RFlorence*; Boucquey, *SMFF*, 1–4; and Maxwell, *French Farce*, 164–67.

8. Linked to the Feast of Fools, the Conards are discussed by Reid ("Carnival in

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Rouen" and "Triumph of the Abbey"); by Guynn (*PF*, e.g., 30–31); and by Rousse, who devotes *TFFMA*, vol. 5, to their repertoire.

9. For more on this editorial cloak-and-dagger tale, see *FF*, 39–41; but I suspect Nazi plunder.

10. Twelve in *FF* + 11 previously available English translations (*FF*, 37) + 12 in *HD* + Longtin and Moll's *Chicken Coop* + 12 in *ID*, plus the 11 previously untranslated farces here = 59.

11. Pagett prepared a glossary of coin, albeit drawn from Tissier rather than from economic historians (284–86). Also helpful: http://www.personal.utulsa.edu/~marc-carlson/history/coin.html; and Rory Naismith's edited volume, *Money and Coinage*.

12. Martin points this out in note 167 of his *SFQS* edition of *Johnny Slowpoke*; below, #11, note 13.

13. While the $100 USD value I've assigned to the *écu* still prevails here, it is worth mentioning that quarter- and eighth-*écu* coins were minted as well. In 1577, Henri III stabilized the gold *écu* at 3 *livres tournois*, which, per my approach, would amount to about $60.

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Brief Plot Summaries

1. *Not Gettin' Any* [*La Farce du Nouveau Marié qui ne peult fournir à l'appoinctement de sa femme*] (*Le Nouveau Marié*) (*RBM*, #2)

For four actors: the Newlywed (Le Nouveau Marié); Demi, the Daughter (La Femme/La Fille); Thomasina, the Mother (La Mère/Thomasse); and Roger, the Father (Le Père/L'Homme/Roger)

An incensed mother prepares to drag her new son-in-law into court because, after an entire month, he has yet to do his sexual duty by her frustrated daughter.

2. *Default Judgment Day*, or, *In Arrears* [*Une Femme qui demande les arrérages à son mari*] (*RBM*, #8; Rousset, #6)

For five actors: the Husband (Le Mary); Alexis (La Dame); Colette, the Chambermaid (La Chambrière); the Marshal (Le Sergent); and Roger, the Neighbor (Le Voysin)

A nubile wife is inclined to sue her poor-performing husband for his failure to make regular marital deposits in accordance with a contractually binding installment plan. When it comes to sex, he's in arrears. Up hers?

3. *The Washtub: A New Translation* [*La Farce du Cuvier*] (*RBM*, #4)

For three actors: Jacko, the Husband (Jacquinot); Jo-Jo, his Wife; and Jackie, his Mother-in-Law (Jacquette)

A henpecked husband discovers a legal loophole in a postnuptial contract that he signed under duress and that obligates him to perform all the household chores. Or does it?

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4. *Basket Case* [*La Farce de la Femme qui fut desrobée à son mari en sa hotte et mise une pierre en son lieu*] (*RC*, #23)

For four or more actors: Farmer John Fielding (Le Laboureur/Jehan des Prés); Jenny, his Wife (Jehannette); Brother Long-John (Frère Frappart); Brother John, the Cleric (Le Clerc); and [a small band of Minstrels]

Jenny would love to be transported: but not in a basket, which is precisely where her jealous husband stuffs her, the better to keep tabs on her. That won't stop Brother Long-John. Aided and abetted by his novice, he hatches a plot to swap her out for a large rock. Let's call it divine intervention.

5. *Who's Your Daddy?* [*Jenin, Filz de Rien*] (*RBM*, #20)

For four actors: Mary, the Mother (La Mère); Johnny (Jenin); Father John Otium (Le Prestre/Magister Campos); and Sir Hystradamus, a Seer (Ung Devin/Maistre Tignon)

Stymied in his quest to learn his paternity, foolish Johnny disbelieves his mother's claim that he was sired by a doublet and jerkin. But is daddy animal, vegetable, or mineral? Or is his father the local Father? Johnny seeks answers from a Seer, whose indeterminate response makes for one of the most philosophical plays of the French Middle Ages.

6. Interlude: *Beauballs, a Charivari* [*L'Esbatement de Coillebaut*] (Ms. 25, Bibliothèque de Berne)

For three or more actors: the Rider on the Ass (*Celuy qui chevauche*); Jeanette (Jehanete); Foxy Renard (Renart); and [some Nightclubbers]

A quick romp of what the "common folk" call a shivaree, this one is for an unlikely would-be bigamist—a serial remarrier?—who would do better to mind his "beauballs."

7. *Poor Bastards* [*Les Batars de Caulx*] (*RLV*, #48)

For five actors: Dolores, the Mother (La Mère); Henry, the Eldest (Henry); Little Colin, the Youngest (Le Petit Colin); Norman, the Student (L'Escolier); and Daisy, the Daughter

Three essentially disinherited children who are unfortunate enough to live in Normandy do battle with their selfish, oafish eldest brother for the rest of the family's rightful legacy. If they fight the law, does the law win?

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8. *Talking Turkey*, or, *A Pilgrim's Progress* [*La Farce de Colin, filz de Thévot le maire, qui vient de Naples et amaine ung Turc prisonnier*] (*RC*, #5; *RBM*, #47; Rousset, #2)

For four actors: Mayor Zell (Thévot, le Maire); Colin, his son (Colin); Gloria (La Femme); and the Pilgrim (Le Pèlerin)

Oh where, oh where has Colin been? Off to do battle during the Italian Wars? Or, as complainant Gloria insists, has he merely been battling fowl back on the farm? Wherever it was, our good soldier reveals his literal "misprision" in the form of some living booty. But is his captive really a Turk?

9. *Okay, Cupid* [*Le Procès d'un jeune moyne et d'un viel gendarme*] (*RT*, #29; Rousset, #7)

For four or more actors: Cupid (Cupidon); Lola (La Fille); the Monk (Le Moine); the Soldier (Le Gendarme); [the Scribe, a follower of Cupid]; and [a small band of Minstrels]

To end poor Lola's trials of desire, who shall it be? A serviceable monk or an older gent in military service? Cupid himself adjudicates as the entire company gives the public a literal song and dance, and it's not about marriage.

10. *Witless Protection* [*La Mère, la Fille, le Tesmoing, L'Amoureulx, et l'Oficial*] (*L'Official*) (*RLV*, #22)

For five or more actors: Judy, the Mother (La Mère); Marion (La Fille); the Marshal (Le Sergent); Willy Nutley, the Witness (Le Témoin/Guillot des Noix); Colin Beefcake (L'Amoureux/Le Beau Colin); the Ecclesiastical Judge (L'Oficial); and [a Security Guard]

Mother Judy is outraged that her daughter has been tricked into premarital sex by one Colin Beefcake. What's worse, he has reneged on his promise to marry the naïve Marion. Legal machinations ensue in ecclesiastical court, notwithstanding somebody's later editorial effort to scrub that venue from the record. Thanks to a voyeuristic witness, will the women prevail?

11. *The Trial of Johnny Slowpoke* [*Jehan de Lagny*] (*RLV*, #31)

For six actors: Johnny Slowpoke (Jehan de Lagny/Le Badin); Father John "Cup-and-Ball" Johnson, Esquire (Mes[s]ire Jehan [de Virelinquin]); Scaffoldia (Trétaulde); Olive (Olyve); Perrette-Come-Early (Pérete Venés-Tost); the Judge (Le Juge); and the Court Recorder (Le Greffier)

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Johnny Slowpoke, quick to poke but slow to make up his mind, has promised marriage to three different women whom he has tricked—or coerced—into premarital sex. When their legal representation proves unequal to the task, it's time for a tragicomic reversal that nobody could have anticipated.

12. *Runaway Groom* [*Le Porteur d'eau*] (Paris, 1632)

For more than seven actors: the Narrator; Giles, the Water Carrier (Le Porteur d'eau/Gille); Madeleine, the Bride-to-Be (L'Espouzée/L'Amoureuse/La Fille/Ma[g]dalaine); Claire, the Mother (Sa Mère/La Mère de L'Espouzée); the Marriage Broker (L'Entremetteur); the Violins (Les Violons); the Guests (Les Conviés); [Madeleine's Employer]; [a Notary]; and [the Priest]

Allegedly ripped from the headlines, this *comédie-ballet*-brawl tells the story of Giles, the Water-Carrier, who leaves poor Madeleine at the altar. He won't be carrying anybody's water anymore, thank you.

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The Plays

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1.

Not Gettin' Any

[La Farce du Nouveau Marié qui ne peult fournir à l'appoinctement de sa femme]
(Le Nouveau Marié)

CAST OF CHARACTERS

The NEWLYWED (Le Nouveau Marié)
[DEMI,] the DAUGHTER (La Femme/La Fille)
THOMASINA, the MOTHER (La Mère/Thomasse)
and ROGER, the FATHER (Le Père/L'Homme/Roger)

PRODUCTION NOTES

The anonymous *Farce nouvelle très bonne et fort joyeuse du Nouveau Marié qui ne peult fournir à l'appoinctement de sa femme, à quatre personnages* (*RBM,* #2), better known as *Le Nouveau Marié*, appears in *ATF*, 1: 11–20; *RF*, 1: 67–104; and *SFQS* (https://sottiesetfarces.wordpress.com/2020/12/08/le-nouveau-marie/). Summarized by Petit de Julleville (*RTC*, 186–87) and by Faivre (*Répertoire*, 306–7), it takes its inspiration from Poggio Bracciolini's fifteenth-century jokebook, the *Facetiae*, which Guillaume Tardif translated into French in 1492.[1] Our 211-verse, octosyllabic play was much later translated into modern French by Tissier (*FFMA*, 1: 19–28) and into Portuguese by Solange Silva as *O Recém-Casado que não é capaz de satisfazer os desejos da mulher*. Sadly, the latter is no longer available online.

For reasons passing understanding, the late great Barbara Bowen, herself an expert in the *Facetiae*, didn't much care for our play (*Caractéristiques*, 50). If you find yourself inclined to agree, however, recall that *Not Gettin' Any* might well have been a "marriage farce," of which relatively few survive. *Runaway Groom* (#12) is one such survivor, as is *The Newlywed Game* (*RBM,* #1; *HD*, #1), the latter directly preceding *Not Gettin' Any* as the first play of the *RBM*.

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From that vantage point, it pokes fun at the learning curve of the newlywed *husband* rather than that of the wife. All things considered, it makes a certain amount of sense that the vast majority of marriage farces would vanish at the conclusion of the nuptial occasions for which they had been conceived (*RF*, 1: 71; Faivre, *Répertoire*, 307; Brown, *MFST*, 39–40). Think about it. How many wedding toasts or skits have been memorialized for posterity? Thus, as you read or perform *Not Gettin' Any*, try to hear it almost as the setup for a shivaree (like #6, *Beauballs*). Also hear as part of the festivities the musical repetitiveness associated with the *rondeau triolet* that typically heralded characters' entrances ("ABT," § "Prose, Verse Music").

At a fairly well-to-do household where, by and large, family members address one another with *vous*, the hotheaded, sexually dominant Thomasina is in a rage. Deadly sin of anger be damned! Her poor unnamed daughter isn't even half full (*elle n'est pas demye* [1: 14; *RF*, 1: 91n]); whence, my christening her "Demi." After a solid month, Demi's marriage has yet to be consummated (*parfait*), neither "legally" nor "to perfection." Give the girl a break! The way Thomasina sees it, harping on verbs that will assume great importance in *Default Judgment Day* (#2) and *Poor Bastards* (#7), no nubile young bride need tolerate a husband who fails to provide (*pourvoir*) the legally required sexual satisfaction (*appoinctement*). Does the absent-minded son-in-law have all his parts in working order (*organisé de ses membres* [1: 15])? Or is it, rather, that Demi, like Poggio's character, simply misperceived how things were actually hanging in her comically unrealistic expectation of a "donkey-dong" (*"De la belle fille qui cuidoit que son mary deust avoir la Marguet aussi grand que celle d'ung asne"* [*Facéties*, 91])? You'll see, and so will the audience because no juridico-medical demonstration is off limits. Make way for a stunning *denudement*, as it were.

Sets, Costumes, or Props

On a set as elaborate or as pared down as you like, the only real requirement of this farce—rare for its evening setting (*RF*, 1: 83)—is a fully laid table and a roast in the oven. Obviously, no buns therein. Not yet.

Scholarly References to Copyrighted Materials (in order of appearance and indicated by © within the text)

"I Got Plenty o' Nuttin'." By George Gershwin, Ira Gershwin, and DuBose Heyward. ASCAP Work ID: 390020583.

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"You Give Love a Bad Name." By Jon Bongiovi, Desmond Child, and Richard Sambora. ASCAP ID: 550147303.

[SCENE 1]

[Possibly after some opening music, lights up on the home of Roger and Thomasina. In the kitchen, there is a great hustle-bustle prior to the evening repast. Demi and her husband are making their way over but they will arrive separately, perhaps after a mimed argument that prompts Demi to run ahead.[2]*]*
Enter the Man.

ROGER: Thomasina!

THOMASINA: What is it, Roger, dear?

ROGER: Hurry up with dinner, would you, dear? I can't wait much longer.

THOMASINA: Sit. Eat. The roast's all ready.

ROGER: No such luck, dear. Now, better move it because here comes that son-in-law of ours.

THOMASINA: If anybody had let me know, I would have made an effort. So help me God, you'll just have to be patient for once. Now, sit tight.

ROGER: [Don't worry,] honey, there's plenty. I just won't eat too much today.

[SCENE 2]

[Enter Demi.]

DEMI: God give you good day. Hi, Dad.

ROGER: Come on in, hon. Welcome home.

DEMI: How are you doing, Mom? God give you good day. Hi, Dad.

THOMASINA: Oh. My. God. You look terrible! Don't tell me that husband of yours has been beating you already.

DEMI: You really fixed my wagon good marrying me off to the likes o'—. God damn it! That's what they call *providing*? Some brilliant hookup *that* was! I'm worse off now than any girl ever. And I was doing just fine. I must've been cursed at birth.

THOMASINA: What? Already? I'm astonished to see you like this. The wedding was barely a month ago this coming Tuesday.

DEMI: Mom, that's more than enough time for a whole world o' trouble. I haven't had one moment's pleasure ever since, believe me.

ROGER: So, when he gets sore, why don't you just get your ass out of the way? Or, if it's nighttime, go to bed. But wait! Don't tell me, lemme guess: you're too stubborn.

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[{*With a sideways glance at Thomasina*} Hmm. I wonder where she gets that from!]

DEMI: I'll have you know, Dad, that he did not beat me. That's not what's wrong.

THOMASINA: What? He's got some girl on the side? He's drunk all the time? Don't tell me he's gambling!

DEMI: What's wrong is, well. . . . The long and the short of it is . . . um . . . things are pretty much in the same condition as when I left home. He couldn't care less about me. He's about as interested in my body as he'd be in a great big steaming pile of shit.

ROGER: Oh, come on now. Shame on you! He's off to a slow start is all. He'll get around to it. Why, it's almost spring, when a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of . . . more worldly things.

THOMASINA: He can take his thoughts and shove 'em up his fancy ass! What the hell are you talking about? Like *you*'d know anything about it. Since when is this your business? Now, let me handle this because, if it turns out he's got nothin' to provide for her *with*, no daughter o' mine ever signed up for that!

ROGER: Jeez, woman, take it easy. You don't have to get so sore. There's no harm in letting him off with a warning, you know. Now, calm down, would you? That's gonna be your best bet.

THOMASINA: Are you kidding me? What is she? Chopped liver? Just look at her! A shadow of her former self! You mark my words: first thing tomorrow, I'm going to sic the law on him, I do solemnly swear! I'll have him cited and inspected by a surgeon. We'll soon see whether all his parts are in working order.

DEMI: For God's sake, keep it down! Quit shouting! I think I see him over—. He'll be here any minute.

THOMASINA: Do you really mean to tell me that, this whole time you've been together, you couldn't figure out a way to snuggle up and take inventory?

[*To the audience*] And that, folks, is what we call "discovery!"

Then, once he's asleep, you see if he's put together right down there.

DEMI: It just so happens, Mom, I gave that a try only last Sunday, as soon as we were under the covers. [I was trying to get to the bottom of it, honest.] Only, he was turned around the other way; so, I kinda got flustered. I kissed him somewhere down there and, then, I made my move. I placed one hand like so; but, then, as soon as I did. . . . He just covers it up with his nightshirt and rolls all the way over to the other side of the bed. Face down!

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THOMASINA: Damn him! He can go straight to hell! But I still find it hard to believe that—. [You had motive, you had means, you had—.] Couldn't you just take the opportunity to get in there and investigate? See how it's hangin'? You hear me, girl?

DEMI: Yeah, well, I didn't. He never gave me the chance, I swear. I don't get it.

THOMASINA: This is outrageous! I'm so mad now, it'll take me at least a month to get over it. This is how we provided for you? I swear! Did he at least get you undressed on the wedding night? Did he take off your nightgown?

DEMI: Nope. Too scared to, I guess. Didn't dare. So, there I am, Ma, pretending to be asleep and such, and it's the performance of a lifetime 'cause, already, I'm pretty nervous and all about the whole thing. And, then, I'm, like, waiting and waiting and waiting, on the off-chance he's gonna sneak up on me with, you know, a little marital surprise and really throw himself into it. It's not like I would've blown him off or anything. My aunties explained the whole thing to me.

THOMASINA: Damn him! He can go straight to—. Good God Almighty, what the hell [is he trying to prove anyway?] Some operator! Now: either he gets his act together fast or, you, my dear, are outta there and game over!

[What the hell is this? A farce? Impotence is grounds for divorce, you know!] I swear to God, every time I think about it, it's like he's right here, stickin' it to me through and through and then twistin' the knife!

ROGER: [He *is* here!] Now, stay out of it. Don't get in between the two of them or there's gonna be trouble.

THOMASINA: Oh, *puh*-lease! Just let him dare show his face around here. I'll give him trouble in a minute. He can count on it.

[SCENE 3]

[Enter the Newlywed.]

THE NEWLYWED: God give you good day. God be with you.

ROGER: Come on in. Dinner's ready.

THE NEWLYWED: Mother? Are you all right? Is everything okay?

THOMASINA: It most certainly is not. Get out of my sight! I can't bear to look at you, I swear!

THE NEWLYWED: God give you good day. God bless you.

ROGER: Come on in. Dinner's ready.

THOMASINA: Like it would be a big deal for a woman to squeeze *that* thing in for the night.

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THE NEWLYWED: What's gotten into you? Feeling testy, are we? Why so upset, Mother?

THOMASINA: What's gotten into *me*? More than what's gotten into *her*! My daughter's a lost cause because of you. I'm fit to be tied!

THE NEWLYWED: But there she is, right next to you. What's wrong with you? By all means, don't hold back.

THOMASINA: I'd beat your ass good if I thought I could lick you, I swear!

Ladies and gentlemen, I give you the Great Pretender!

Where do you get off gettin' hitched and taking advantage of a person like my daughter? And at her age! You oughta be all over that! Pullin' out all the stops to please her, leavin' no stone unturned . . . .

ROGER: Do *not* make me lose my temper. Now, shut up or you'll be sorry.

THOMASINA: I will not!

Liar, liar, pants on fire!

Dig in your heels all you want but—Jesus fucking Christ!—he's not goin' anywhere till I see his junk! Is he a natural man down there or what? What's he packin'?

ROGER: It just so happens, dear, that a man sows his wild oats . . . whenever, as he's able. Some got plenty o' plenty;© others, for one reason or another, they got plenty o' nuttin'.© One false move, they get nipped in the bud.

THOMASINA: [So? Let him do something with all that nuttin' already and make his fucking case!]

Good God Almighty, boy, I'll have you cited! [You won't provide, *I'll* provide *you* with a big, fat—.] Am I ever gonna sic the law on you. Jeez.

Now, if you know what's good for you, you'll put out or get out because, if you were any kinda real man like Nature intended, you'd have nothing to hide, and *she* woulda found out by now.[3] She'd know her rights too, if she could just figure out how to . . . get mad and get even! She *will* be made whole in a court of law!

[*She pulls out a purse from her bosom.*] If we can get this done for a thousand bucks, I'll even pony up myself. I'm all in!

THE NEWLYWED: [*Pointing to her head*] God knows *you* should be so lucky to pack as much up there as I got down here! [How's it hangin', my ass!] Like *I'd* ever be allowed to traipse *you* around from town to town judge-shopping. I'd be set for life!

THOMASINA: And you! You could fit everything *you* know on the head of a—. If you were packin' any kind of anything down there, you'd still have to be ten thousand times cockier to pull one over on *me*! What the hell were you even doing getting married in the first place?

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THE NEWLYWED: Who, me?

THOMASINA: Where are your bros, bro?

[A demonstration ensues.]

THE NEWLYWED: Good God Almighty, woman, in your face! Check out these beautiful boys! How's that for a pair? You would've done a helluva lot better to zip it.

[{*To Demi*} You too, *chérie*.]

DEMI: Right there! Now, *that* can't be beat! Hey, no cause to spare the rod on my account. And that thing better not be a costume![4]

THOMASINA: And *you* got no cause to complain! [Nobody's striking *that* from the record!] It's a wonder you didn't trip over it and—hey!—at least he didn't thee endow by sticking it in wherever at all hours. It's a wonder he could hide the big reveal under the sheets at all.

THE NEWLYWED: [*To the audience and/or Roger*] Have you ever seen a creature like this? She's hysterical.

THOMASINA: And get a load o' milord Johnson over here, folks! What a joke! Talk about being set for life with some freakshow! All bells and whistles the whole time he was engaged: dippin' that wick everywhere in sight, dancin' his fancy ass all over town. Couldn't keep it in his pants and couldn't wait to get into *her* pants. Hell, he practically forced her! But, then, come time to form a more perfect union, lowdown double-crosser's got nothin'. And I call that . . . breach of contract, for God's sake! At the very least, it's false advertising.

That's it! She's gone!

ROGER: Thomasina! You've said quite enough for today. He'll get around to it. He'll take it under advisement.

THOMASINA: A month is way too long to wait! In the name of Charlemagne himself—the great Carolus *Magnum*—I swear: if you were ever to let even one week—hell, three *days*—go by without doin' *me*, that would be it for you too, mister! I'd be of a mind to go all out and end you too. Unless, of course, there were extenuating circumstances. [Or you had a note from the doctor or something.]

ROGER: Good to know. He gets it already. [It's not like that little demonstration was particularly subtle.] Now, just shut up. He'll change his ways. Nothin' a good dinner won't resolve.

THOMASINA: No food for him! And nothing to drink either. Not in *this* house.

THE NEWLYWED: I'll be back. Good news is a-comin', Mother, just around the bend. I've been busy is all, with a previous engagement. Something came up. But all she has to do is come home with me right now.

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THOMASINA: And you won't fall short?
THE NEWLYWED: Not a chance.
THOMASINA: [*To Demi*] Off you go, then, girl, and, [if you don't want this whole thing annulled,] you'll come back here right after and tell me all about it [before I really give him a severance package]. He turns over a new leaf or you're outta there.

Speaking of which, us too, folks: we out!

God bless and keep you, one and all.
[It's time to do the curtain call.]

The End

NOTES

1. Martin reproduces a long excerpt from *Facetiae*, #31 (*SFQS*, Préf.); see also Montaiglon's edition of the Tardif translation, *Facéties*, 91–96.

2. For music, "You Give Love a Bad Name"© might work well. I read the young couple's arrival as unexpected; but Tissier thinks that, by analogy to Poggio, they have been invited (*RF*, 1: 85n; *FFMA*, 1: 337n2; see also Faivre, *Répertoire*, 306).

3. *Ses cinq cens de nature* (1: 17) could possibly be a reference to another *RBM* play, the *Farce nouvelle des cinq cens de l'homme* (#61).

4. For these two speeches, Tissier thinks that the Newlywed is reproaching Demi for having confided their marital difficulties to her mother, and that Demi is trying to avoid a beating from Thomasina (*RF*, 1: 101; *FFMA*, 1: 27). I have a slightly different take.

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2.

Default Judgment Day, or, *In Arrears*

[Une Femme qui demande les arrérages à son mari]

CAST OF CHARACTERS

The HUSBAND (Le Mary)
[ALEXIS,] the LADY (La Dame)
COLETTE, the CHAMBERMAID (La Chambrière)
The MARSHAL (Le Sergent)
and [ROGER,] the NEIGHBOR (Le Voysin)

PRODUCTION NOTES

Requiring considerably more unpacking than the other eleven farces is this, my composite edition of the anonymous *Farce nouvelle très bonne et fort joyeuse des femmes qui demandent les arrérages de leurs maris et les font obliger par nisi, à cinq personnages*, published by Nicholas Chrestien around 1550 (*RBM*, #8) and by Rousset in 1612 (#6). From the hand of a learned author and, indubitably, a Basochien, our play of 332 entirely regular octosyllabic verses was summarized by Petit de Julleville (*RTC*, 134–35), by Faivre (*Répertoire*, 144–45), and by Delepierre (*DLU*, 13). The *RBM* version was first edited in *ATF*, 1: 111–27; while Caron reedited Rousset in *Collection* (1.6) with "substantial differences" (*RTC*, 134), after which Brunet republished Caron in his *Recueil de plusieurs farces* (1: 97–117). And yet, despite all that early interest, there had been no new edition since 1873 until, on 3 December 2020, Martin posted a most welcome update in *SFQS* (https://sottiesetfarces.wordpress.com/2020/12/03/les-femmes-qui-demandent-les-arrerages/). Nor, till now, had there been any translation into any vernacular. Once we get into the legal weeds, you'll see why.

From the repertoire of the Conards of Rouen (*SFQS*, Préf.) and peppered throughout with extreme legalese for debt collection and bankruptcy, this

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farce was off-putting even to Faivre, who critiqued its "weighty juridical debates" as pedantic, obscurantist, and "desperately flat" (*Répertoire*, 146). Funny he should mention it. "Desperately flat" is precisely the problem posed by an unnamed Husband to his unnamed Wife, here "Alexis" owing to her propensity for litigiousness (*lex* = law). She has yet to collect on a debt, payment of which had been guaranteed in her marriage contract and, as always, farce has something to say about *servicing* that debt. But what kind of debt is it? Monetary or marital? Are we talking about dowries and property law? Or is *Default Judgment Day* targeting the "marital debt" (*devoir conjugal*) that enshrined the reciprocal spousal duty to provide sex on demand? In all likelihood, the comedy derives from a half-assed admixture of both, articulated primarily by an asinine character who allows the Basochiens to laugh their assess off at his expense. And at Alexis's, too.

On one hand, our farce holds forth about holding title. When we learn in Scene 2 that all property is in the Husband's name, it's all the more hilarious because we don't actually *know* his name (and that's how it will stay). The juridical situation thus resonates with such near-contemporaneous works as the *Practique Judiciaire* (1572) by the Flemish scholar Joos de Damhouder (gallicized as Damhoudère): "during the marriage, the husband is vested with ownership, becoming the sole possessor and proprietor of all the fiefs, lands, domains, and all the material goods of his wife" (*le mari durant le mariage est ensaisine & devenu possessoire & possesseur en tous fiefs, terres, domaines, & en tous biens immeubles de sa femme* [chap. 36.8; p. 39]). On the other hand, while Alexis patently wants peaceful enjoyment of her property, she is, above all, bent on collecting a debt on which the Husband has defaulted and, consistent with the letter and spirit of farce, it's bound to be that other remittance: the marital debt of sex.[1] Indeed, the Marshal and Roger are at pains to emphasize that she was good enough to let her Husband off for half—which release would have allowed him to "pay around" adulterously for a good three or four days a week (1: 117; Rousset, 101).

Such is the crisis that spawns the plot of *Default Judgment Day*, which, as you shall see, calls for numerous bracketed interpolations to tease out the meaning of otherwise obscure vocabulary. Absent the requisite remittances, should Alexis seek satisfaction elsewhere from a better "payer" (1: 115–16; Rousset, 103)—the *bon payeur* being the subject of another farce (*RLV*, #53)? Is "private distraint" an option, to wit, an extrajuridical seizure of goods (Smail, *Legal Plunder*, 136–46)? Or is a remedy through the courts the best course of action and, if so, which court? Civil or ecclesiastical? (That is the very question, by the way, that prompts an unknown individual to manhan-

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dle the original text of #10, *Witless Protection*.) Normally, jurisdiction over a spouse's marital debt or, for that matter, over anything related to the sacrament of marriage, would lie within the purview of the ecclesiastical courts, where men and women alike sought redress but where enforcement was relatively weak, especially for women. Alexis, however, is partial to civil litigation. Egged on by her sassy chambermaid, Colette (a worthy forerunner to Molière's Dorine in *Tartuffe*), she turns to an all-purpose Marshal who is part officer, part notary public, and part process server. The rest is legal history. And extensive legalese.

Default Judgment Day relies heavily on a highly technical lexicon, starting with the *cédulle*, the promissory note held by Alexis and one of the many early French "physical testaments of credit relations, whose value depended on the understanding that the person who issued them could be trusted to pay" (Pagett, "Money Plays," 15–16). Needless to say, trust is not farce's strong suit. Equally pertinent are *saisine* and *dessaisine* (civil possession and dispossession), *nisi* (a condition on a contract involving a waiting period or right to recission), the titular *arrérages* (installment payments), *morte paye* or "dead pay" (the pension paid to the family of a deceased soldier [Stewart, "Dead Pay"]), and *plege gage* or *gageplege* (collateral or, in Normandy, a vassal's guarantee to meet his financial obligations to his overlord while residing outside the fief). You can also expect wordplay galore on *saisine*, *dessaisine*, and *ressaisier* ("possession," "property rights," "seizure," "spoliation," and "satedness" [e.g., 1: 119]) as well as on *le cas* for both a "legal case" and a "vagina" (*SFQS*, notes 4, 40, 72, 85). Mostly, though, our farce revolves around three important issues of jurisprudence:

First, there is the question of Alexis's eligibility to seek, in civil or ecclesiastical court, the restoration or reassignment of full and fair use of her property (*la complainte en nouvelleté*). In this instance, the complex discussions in Rousset (107–8) might have sprung directly from the pages of a law book or a *coutumier*. If anything, I suspect that the expanded excurses of Rousset's *remaniement* of 1612 suggest not only a "rehandling" but a "reeducation" in property law for its early-seventeenth-century audience.[2] I am likewise tempted to theorize, as did Sara McDougall in a conversation, that a premodern woman might well have found it advantageous to redefine marital relations as a contractual matter, thereby facilitating a change of venue to civil court. Unless, of course, her husband were himself a married member of the clergy (as hinted in Rousset), in which case, all bets were off. In no way does the present Husband sound particularly religious; then again, neither do most of the clerics of farce.[3]

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Second, ambiguity surrounds Alexis's *apoinctement*, which could denote her legal and sexual due (as in #1, *Not Gettin' Any*), the "signing" of a marriage agreement, or the actual marital "servicing." And, wouldn't you know it? At the crucial moment of presumed clarification, the lessons of *RBM* and Rousset are at variance. I'll retain the ambiguity but, in the *RBM*, the frustrated wife speaks of having had "neither goods nor pleasure" *since* the *apoinctement* (probably the "signing"): *Oncques puis nostre apoinctement, / Par ma foy, je n'euz bien ne ayse* (1: 116). But, in Rousset, she alludes to the "last" or "most recent" "signing" or "servicing" (*nostre appointement dernier* [104]), which could theoretically signal the spouses' *latest hook-up*. The latter phrasing would, in turn, imply no dereliction on the part of the Husband. Alternatively, if Alexis means the "latest," "last," or "final" version of a marriage contract that had necessitated multiple drafts, the *RBM* leaves no doubt that there was nothing recent about it. A full five years' of back pay has accrued (1: 117), whereas, in Rousset, it is "only" a single year (107–8), which, statutorily, makes all the difference. The time frame of "a year and a day" was often decisive in medieval law and, to this day, remains a part of common law (below, note 8). Nor does it help that the Marshal who prepared the original agreement either "concluded" or "confused" the couple's marital bargain: *Nostre appoinctement tout* conclus (1: 117) vs. *Nostre appointement tant* confus (Rousset, 104; my emphases). Nor do any of the aforementioned ambiguities rule out the possibility of plenty of sexual servicing *outside* the bounds of holy wedlock. Martin speculates, for example, that Alexis is in an adulterous liaison with the Husband's friend and neighbor (*SFQS*, Préf; note 69). A precursor of sorts to Monsieur Robert in Molière's *Médecin Malgré Lui* (*RTC*, 135), he shall be "Roger" by analogy to *The Conman's Confession* (*ID*, #1). Personally, I find it just as plausible to read the two men as preferring *each other's* company.

And, third, just wait for the closing triumph of casuistry associated with the equivocal ramifications of *s'acquitter*. In addition to "paying up" or "acquitting oneself," the verb denotes—get this—*its opposite*. Conveniently for the debtor, *s'acquitter* can signify either "paying a debt" or "*not* paying it," and, in *Default Judgment Day*, either forgiving a deadbeat husband (whose entire vibe is fuhgeddaboudit) or *not* forgiving him. Bottom line: *somebody* wipes the slate clean, which just so happens to be one of our play's refrains: *Il ne luy chaut à qui il paye, / Mais qu'ilz soient quitz* (1: 115–16; Rousset, 103). It's pay to play, folks, and *play to pay*. If only it were clear who pays, who plays, who gets played, who forgives, and who gets stuck with the tab. Only dramaturgy will tell; and only dramaturgy will shed light on an allegedly happy ending that comes out of left field.

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For all the painstaking logic on which our farce is built, the thoroughly unredeemable Husband must wind up redeemable enough for the play to strike a literally harmonious closing musical *chord* that transforms marital *discord* into *accord* (1: 125; Rousset, 115–16). But, as with everything else, even the play's several musical numbers are rife with ambiguity, starting with the opening duet of Scene 1 in which Roger and the Husband "speak and sing" a song that is often compared to "Greensleeves": "*Celle qui m'a demandé*" (*Le Mary, & le Voisin disent en chantant* [109; "ABT," § "Prose, Verse, and Music"]). We can but wonder what the pair has to sing about. Do both men have mistresses? Is Roger coveting his neighbor's wife? The plot thickens at once because there are at least two extant versions of "*Celle qui m'a demandé*," one courtly, the other, not so much (*MFST*, 196). Rousset quotes the courtly one; but the *RBM* features a call-out to the title alone: an invitation, I think, to consider the more mercenary lyrics of the other version (below, note 9). And, come "default judgment day," where does all that leave Alexis? As everyone waits for Lent to give way to the pleasures of Mardi Gras (1: 125), is there any joy for *her* to be had in Studville? Everything cuts both ways; but, no matter how you cut it, do put this debt play into your collection.

Sets, Costumes, or Props

A variety of legal documents are needed on stage: a promissory note, a marriage contract, a number of lawbooks, and a highly official-looking warrant (ideally, a scroll).

Scholarly References to Copyrighted Materials (in order of appearance and indicated by © within the text)

"Hit the Road, Jack." By Percy Mayfield. BMI Work #571691.

"Bad to the Bone." By George Thorogood. BMI Work #80431.

"Dreams." By Stevie Nicks. BMI Work #343279.

"It Ain't the Meat, It's the Motion." By Henry Glover and Sydney Nathan. BMI Work #735013.

"Promises, Promises." By Burt Bacharach and Hal David. https://www.concordtheatricals.com/p/44675/promises-promises

"What Is a Youth?" [From *Romeo and Juliet.*] By Nino Rota. ASCAP Work ID: 530159954.

"Anticipation." By Carly Simon. ASCAP Work ID: 310124602.

"Those Were the Days." By Eugene Raskin. ASCAP Work ID: 500195793.

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"Those Were the Days." [Theme song from *All in the Family*.] By Lee Adams and Charles Strouse. ASCAP Work ID: 500206922.

"Stand and Deliver." By Steven George, John Lang, and Richard Page. ASCAP Work ID: 490612325.

"If Ever I Would Leave You." By Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe. Music Theatre International. https://www.mtishows.com/camelot

"Let's Call the Whole Thing Off." By George and Ira Gershwin. ASCAP Work ID: 42003061.

"Don't Leave Me This Way." By Kenneth Gamble, Cary Grant Gilbert, and Leon Huff. BMI Work #323300.

[SCENE 1]

[Before the characters' entrance, a lovely, romantic lyric is heard, to be updated at will, perhaps sung by a single minstrel or a small chamber choir.]

I've lately found the girl for me.
She's beautiful and, oh, those eyes!
She loves me true, she's heavenly.
I've lately found the girl for me
and I'm much in her debt, surprise!
I've lately found the girl for me.
She's beautiful and, oh, those eyes![4]

[Lights up on a domestic interior where Alexis and Colette are preparing to head into town. Through a window, they catch a glimpse of the Husband. He is returning from an assignation and is soon joined by BFF Roger, likewise returning from affairs of his own.]

THE HUSBAND *opens with a happy tune*:

I've found myself just recently
a hot new babe who's just my size.
She does it—does *me*—perfectly.
I've found myself just recently
a major liability.
The upkeep's killing me: surprise!
I've found myself just recently
a hot new babe who's just my size.

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[Lights down slowly on the Husband and Roger, who meander into town until they disappear from view.]

[ALEXIS,] THE LADY ⟨*speaking to her Chambermaid*⟩: What'd I just say? Surprise, surprise! He'd never keep his promise—*please!*—⟨to me . . . ⟩ to you . . .

COLETTE: How much he put out?[5]

ALEXIS: Zip! He lies! What'd I just say? Surprise, surprise!

⟨**COLETTE:** How many times?

ALEXIS: That's zip. He lied!⟩

COLETTE: Sweet Lord, that's what you subsidized? What kind of man is that? *Puh-lease!* Lay down with dogs, ma'am, you get fleas.

ALEXIS: What'd I just say? Surprise, surprise! He'd never keep his promise. *Please!*

My sweet Lord: there must be some scheme we can come up with. Help me out. You in?

COLETTE: I'm in! Take him to court! He knows no shame. ⟨But, ma'am, we'll have to trick him into doing his duty by you.

[{*To the audience*} And by *me* too!]

ALEXIS: A trick, that's it! Yes, I agree. [Lay down with dogs, get perjury.]

But he's so shameless, I'll have you know, that only brute force will bring him around. This is a farce. Subtlety won't work.

COLETTE: Which would serve him right! You've just got to take him to court, ma'am, that's all there is to it.⟩ Shameless, is it? *You* shame *him* like he's never known shame his whole life! Drag his name through the mud! I'll do everything in my power to help bring him around, but go after him, ma'am! ⟨It just so happens. . . . Have I got a guy for you! Let's just say I have access to a certain prosecutor in town who'll know exactly how to play it.

Now, have him cited, ma'am. He won't know what hit him. He appears *in personam* or it's a default judgment in your favor.⟩ It'll be a *cause célèbre*!

ALEXIS: Yes, but, Colette, I'm in no mood to pursue him in ecclesiastical court. ⟨It's not my style.⟩

COLETTE: And why not?

ALEXIS: It's how they do things. Day in, day out: Latin, Latin, Latin! That's all they speak and I can't understand one miserable word of it.

COLETTE: Disgusting, ain't it? They mean well and all, but you can't make heads or tails outta what they're saying. And they sure as hell don't know how the game is played. Besides, it's not like we women are ever gonna get a bite outta that ecclesiastical apple anyhow.

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[*To the clergy in the audience*] ⟨Not that I'm blaming anyone in particular, mind you. It is what it is. But, in secular court, they've got, shall we say, different rules of order. It's more, you know, *civil*.⟩

So, what do you say we take a bite outta crime and go with civil court? That's where we hit him, and we hit him hard. [We'll throw the book at him.]

[*To the audience*] And they say we women are all bark and no bite.

You're still holding his note, right? ⟨Do you happen to have it on you?⟩

ALEXIS: You bet I do. That's about all I'm holding. [*She produces the document.*]

COLETTE: So, there you go! What are you waiting for? Have him served! Haul his ass into court tomorrow!

Come on, chin up: you can do it. He admits that's his signature—or his mark, or whatever the hell *that* is—and that's that. We pursue him to the fullest extent of the law. It's what they call a vigorous prosecution.

ALEXIS: Did I win the husband lottery here or what? ⟨Oh, my God!⟩ A woman's an awful lot happier with a man she can get along with.

COLETTE: ⟨You know what they say: you make your own luck.⟩ Builds character. They don't call us the stronger sex for nothing.

[{*To the audience*} And you, up there! No comments from the peanut gallery!]

ALEXIS: Builds nothing! As if I'm getting any peaceful enjoyment off mine. And I'll be damned if I can discharge his duty for him. Or get somebody else to stand in. ⟨To make matters worse, he doesn't even know where to make the deposit.⟩

COLETTE: [He's stiffing you, ma'am, and not in a good way.] But, know what? I used to be in service to a master who "discharged" all the time. ⟨A real player, he was,⟩ I swear. First me, then the mistress. Hugging, kissing, fucking. You name it, he did it.

ALEXIS: *Ooh.* If only!

COLETTE: Not to give you the blow-by-blow or nothin', ma'am, but, whenever he'd come by, he'd have me climb on top—right off the bat, you know?—upstairs, downstairs, in my lady's chamber. Me, ⟨her, *us*, whoever⟩. And, then, he'd mess around as much as he felt like.

ALEXIS: *Ooh.* If only!

COLETTE: ⟨The mistress had to put up with a lot—you know?⟩—with all that pokin' around. But I never heard her complain. Him neither. It was like, nothing rubbed 'em the wrong way.

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ALEXIS: *Ooh-la-la!* If only!

Mine doesn't rub me *any* way. Come time to approach, he's . . . [insolvent]. I might as well just come right out and say it: it's as if—Jeez!—you want anything even resembling action, you've practically gotta shove a sickle up his ass and *pry* out a little disbursement, I swear! I'm dying here.

COLETTE: {*To the audience*} [Makes you sickle, don't it, folks?]

[*To Alexis*] Whatchoo say?©[6]

ALEXIS: And, if I should ⟨happen to⟩ press up against him, it's like a declaration of war or something. ⟨He gets mad⟩ and he beats me back. Must be a hundred times by now. And counting. I'm dying here.

COLETTE: Whatchoo say?©

ALEXIS: ⟨I think you've got the overall thrust. Breaks my heart in two every time I think about it.⟩ Like a cold, icy wind. Sends shivers up my spine. And then, I get a cough. Or I'm so weak in the knees, I can't even feel my lady parts. ⟨Lord have mercy, that husband of mine's bad to the bone!⟩

COLETTE: *B-b-bad* to the bone!© Yes, ma'am, lot of 'em out there's like that.

ALEXIS: [*To the audience*] Ladies and gentlemen, I ask you: What do you think of such a man? He's—*how you say?*—a disaster of a lord and master.

COLETTE: I know exactly what you mean, ma'am. He's a *Renaissance* disaster-man.

ALEXIS: And, to see him strut his stuff like he does, you'd think he'd be a good risk and all: a real *payer*.

COLETTE: ⟨Can't somebody give him a good talking to? You don't have to be a martyr, you know.

Hey, what about what's-his-name, comes by here all the time? Maybe *he* could provide a little relief. Put you out of your misery? And without all the heretofores, theretofores, and whereevertofores. No ifs, ands, or buttheads.[7]

ALEXIS: I know exactly who you mean. Now, there's a real Renaissance man! You can tell just by looking at him.

COLETTE: To see *him* strut his stuff like he does . . . He's a payer, all right! Plays it as it lays. Pays whoever's gonna play till he wipes that slate clean and gets off!

ALEXIS: Oh, no he doesn't, so help me God!⟩

COLETTE: He's a payer, all right! Pays it as it lays. Pays whoever's gonna play till they all get off!

ALEXIS: Never! So help me God! But he *is* a player on the battlefield, all

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right. There's no fraud that I'm aware of. He's not collecting some dead soldier's pension—[they call it "dead-pay," folks, and, believe me: is *my* player ever gonna pay, dead to rights!]

COLETTE: He's a payer, I say, in the name of Saint Matthew [and Saint Bene-*debt*. Stand by now, girls, with that collection plate]!

ALEXIS: That's his reputation, at any rate.

COLETTE: He's a payer, all right! Pays it as it lays. Pays whoever's gonna play till he wipes that slate clean and gets off!

⟨That's right, folks: no dead-pay there! He's a payer in good standing, they say. He ain't no mercenary. And he don't run no tab neither.

Ain't nothin' like that husband o' yours, ma'am.

ALEXIS: Which is the root of all my troubles. What do you think we're talking about here anyway? He's a deadbeat.

COLETTE: [{*To the audience*} Dead *meat*'s more like, eh, folks?]

So, lemme sic the marshal on him already, ma'am. We'll scare the crap out of him. Hell, a lousy process-server will do. He'll come right away—no muss, no fuss, no argument, no delay—and he'll get that prick to pay up or put out. Either way, ma'am, you settle the score.

ALEXIS: Settle? Never! Not till I get paid! Don't you remember what happened the last time I settled? I can see it now, as if it were yesterday: instead of remitting, it's been like cross-examination ever since. All he ever advances is an argument.⟩

But let's quit beating around the bush, shall we? You're on! Let's do it.

[*She looks around in frustration, as if the actor playing the Marshal has missed his cue.*] I am the aggrieved party after all, and I'm aiming to win the battle *and* the war.

I say: Is there never an officer around when you need one?

COLETTE: [*Loudly*] We've clearly got our work cut out for us, ma'am, if we want that vigorous prosecution.

ALEXIS: And no settlements, I said. I haven't had one moment's peace—or peaceful enjoyment—since I signed on the dotted line at the engagement.

[SCENE 2]

[Enter the Marshal.]

THE MARSHAL: God be with you, [ladies. Ma'am]. Hope you don't mind. Guess nobody saw me come in.

ALEXIS: And also with you, sir, God bless, ⟨and what a piece of timing!⟩ Ever heard of the front door?

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THE MARSHAL: God be with you, [ladies. Ma'am]. Hope you don't mind. In the name of Saint Blazin' Saddles: nice place you got here.

COLETTE: Nice face you got there, backdoor man.

THE MARSHAL: Guess nobody saw me come in.

ALEXIS: Welcome, sir, and, God bless. It just so happens, I'm in urgent need of your services. Weren't you the one who was present—? ⟨Hello! [*She snaps her fingers.*] *Fully* present?⟩—at the whole negotiation of my marriage contract? You executed the entire agreement, did you not?

THE MARSHAL: Nope. Not as far as I can recall, ⟨unless. . . . Wanna remind me of the cast of characters?⟩ [*He gestures for a bribe.*]

ALEXIS: This is outrageous! I'm going to lose my temper in a—. Five whole years in arrears! That's how long that husband of mine has had a balance due, and it's high time he service the debt! He promised. ⟨Before witnesses!⟩

[The Marshal draws a blank?]

You don't remember all those clauses and covenants and contingencies?

THE MARSHAL: Oh yeah! ⟨The signing!⟩ That *was* me! It's all coming back to me now. ⟨I was there!⟩ Drew up the papers myself for all them financials. Plus, there was that key *stiputation* and everything. You was real nice about it too at the time. Gave him a break on the price, as I recall—a kickback—but on that one condition and one condition alone:

You would take pity on him temporarily and settle for half, so long as ⟨he promised to make regular deposits in a timely manner . . . [in partial fulfillment of the outstanding debt, *et cetera, et cetera*. You'd take it out in trade. Payable any time too.] An installment plan—that was it!—but only if. . . . He had to keep his end up in *perpendicular.*⟩ Promised to take care of business Monday through Friday. Sundays and holidays too.

⟨**ALEXIS:** By George, I think he's got it! You oversaw the entire exchange—didn't you?—which, as you'll recall, I had some concerns about at the time, I swear! I had to fetch you I know don't how many times for legal advice.⟩

COLETTE: Yeah! Inspector Clousseau here's finally on the same page!

You remember now, don'tcha, pal? *I* came to fetch you I don't know how many times for all that urgent legal advice, I swear, about that very thing.

THE MARSHAL: Whaddaya mean? He's overdue? Don't tell me he's been delinquent on the *emissions*? He been withholding payment?

[**ALEXIS:** That's right, no usufruct!

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THE MARSHAL: Hey! Who you callin' a fruit?]
⟨No, really: All this time⟩?

ALEXIS: *Wasted* time, and I've had enough. I want this over with. In sum, I'm calling in the note.

THE MARSHAL: Nothin'? He ain't discharged his duties?

ALEXIS: [He has not discharged] one miserable drop.

THE MARSHAL: Wow. What can I say? I'm stupefied. Lemme make sure I heard you right. You mean to tell me he ain't discharged . . . nothin'?

⟨**COLETTE:** He's got a nerve, I'll swear to that right now.
[Hey, *stupefied*!] This is outrageous! And just plain wrong. And illegal. [And a sin too.]⟩

ALEXIS: [As for those *liquid* assets:] not one drop, I said. I so much as get near him and—. ⟨You should see the look on his face! He just squirms and tries to get away.
Give me justice, I say. It's a matter of *principal*.⟩

THE MARSHAL: No, really: Nothin'?

ALEXIS: Not one miserable drop, I said.

THE MARSHAL: I'm stupefied, for sure.

ALEXIS: Only thing "for sure" in this life is death and taxes. Or, in my case, cruel and unusual punishment.

COLETTE: Give her justice, Officer, do your duty. His comportment is outrageous.

THE MARSHAL: Okeydokey, then, but take it from me, ladies: the courtroom's no place for this kinda material. It's a losing proposition from the get-go. For *her*. ⟨And them costs really add up too. Talk about cruel and unusual! I mean, what's she gonna do? Put a lien on his junk?⟩ Besides, the last thing them two need is some long, drawn-out trial.

ALEXIS: I've waited long enough as it is, thank you very much. No more delays and no more undue burden! [Interest is compounded daily, you know.]

COLETTE: ⟨There's gotta be a quicker way.⟩ Couldn't you get a note from the King or a bull from the Pope or something? Like that neighbor of ours did that time.

THE MARSHAL: A *what*?

COLETTE: A bull. A writ. A summons. To restore full and fair use of her property. She'd get satisfaction in no time. ⟨Worked like a charm for our neighbor, it did. She called in the note and—just like that!—she gets a summary judgment on the delinquency. In *her* favor. And did *she* ever get expedited satisfaction on that outstanding debt, as in: he had to make good immediately—*real* good⟩—which is just what *Madame* needs.

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[I mean, the dude defaulted! What are you waiting for? Swear out a warrant! Put him into collection! Garnish his wages! Wait: What wages? Go ahead! Search the joint! Seize his assets! Get an affidavit.]

THE MARSHAL: [And who the hell's David? He ain't got nothin' to do with this! Besides,] the way I heard it, precedent ain't *German* to the case at hand. For him *or* his bratwurst.

COLETTE: And why not?

THE MARSHAL: What do *you* think? ⟨If you woulda been listening, you woulda heard⟩ that she ain't enjoyed no kinda use for over a year. That's how come she's so bent outta shape, by the way: not one single day of *cavortium* [for five whole years]! In the law, we call that a "*protractored* default." So, she ain't in no kinda position now to seize them goods! There *is* such a thing as a *statue* of limitations, you know.

Nope. Only thing she can do now is send the debtor a little reminder: for *statuary* relief. [*More and more histrionically*] She serves him with legal notice and, basically, she says she ain't gonna take it no more and yada, yada, yada: "the agreement is still in full force"; "she's gonna tolerate no further delinquency in the future," *et cetera, et cetera*, till the day she dies. Otherwise, she might as well flat-out renounce *all* her rights, in their entirety, to *her* property. [Yup! Totally *disenfranchivized*!]

Puh-lease! You got an agreement in place for *quotidious* remittance and she lets even *one* year go by without a little deficit spending? Now, that's just negligence.[8]

ALEXIS: [No need to *overdue* it.] So, what exactly are you instructing me to do? How do I reassert my property rights?—[that's *real* property rights—and without forfeiting my assets?]

THE MARSHAL: Not a lawsuit, that's for *surety.*

ALEXIS: So, what recourse do I have? What's my cause of action?⟩ Is there no hope for restitution? What about collateral? Could we carry the balance forward? What if we had him guarantee full satisfaction of next year's payments right now?

THE MARSHAL: Thing is, as I recall—it's all coming back to me now—he's the one holds title to the whole *kitten caboodle*, as sole *priapatator*. Everything's in his name, right? But he wouldn't be nowhere without a woman on top to keep his ass in line.

[**COLETTE:** What's *that* got to do with the price of meat?]

THE MARSHAL: [It's not the meat, it's the motion.©]

Now, tell me, little lady: What're you goin' for here anyway? Fifty lashes? And whaddaya wanna go and add insult to injury for and shove

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some lawsuit up his ass? For what? Bein' in arrears? [That ain't no way to get you some back pay.]

Seriously, ma'am, just hang onto your junk and you'll see: from that day forward, won't be no wild man—not nowhere, not no how—and no Samson to nobody's Delilah ever's gonna dare dispossess *you*! Pity the fool! So, come on, now! Ain't no need to lawyer up. You don't wanna be suing when the other party ain't even complainin'.

COLETTE: It *is* the meat: *dead* meat. It *is* the motion.©

ALEXIS: You catch more flies with honey.

COLETTE: [*To the Marshal*] Go teach 'im a lesson! There's gotta be a trick. Can't she get off on a technicality?

THE MARSHAL: ⟨Easy does it, I said. Flies? Honey? You don't wanna be filing for no *conjunctive* relief.⟩ Make love, not war. ⟨If you want, I can go find him right now.⟩

ALEXIS: Oh, very well: I authorize you to proceed.

⟨Go ahead, I said! Knock yourself out.⟩ Go collect. [And here's to a speedy recovery!]

THE MARSHAL: I'm on the case, ma'am, and I got your back! [*He tries to pat her butt; Alexis swats him away.*] Soon enough, we'll all see how this whole thing turns out. ⟨I should have some news for you in ninety minutes or so, [depending on runtime].

ALEXIS: From your lips to God's ear! *Good* news, I hope.

THE MARSHAL: Just stick with me, ma'am, I'm off to test the waters right now. I mean, what are you gonna do? Throw him in debtors' prison? Till next time, then, I bid you adieu.⟩

[Lights down slowly on Alexis and Colette as they search the house for the marriage contract. Exit the Marshal to join the Husband and Roger. After some difficulty, he locates them as they emerge anew from a field.]

[SCENE 3]

Enter the Husband and the Neighbor singing "Celle qui m'a demandé, etc."
[Roger attempts repeatedly—and unsuccessfully—to keep the Husband on script.]

⟨THE HUSBAND AND THE NEIGHBOR, [ROGER]:

I pledge my love to her, now and always,
and never will I ever go astray,
were she a hundred times more uppity.[9]⟩

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THE HUSBAND:

I'd pledge my love to her, now and always . . .
except that broad wants money outta me,
which isn't right. Not one dime. How dare she?
No deal! I'll never love her anyway!

I mean, what the fuck? She wants a return on her investment? It's not good enough for her that I've given my love?

ROGER [*registers disapproval and reprises the song*]**:**

But never will I ever go astray,
were she a hundred times more uppity.

THE HUSBAND: I'm outta there! Damn straight I'll go astray: find myself a new beneficiary without eyes on my purse, believe you me. As if *she*'d get a share or get a say.

ROGER: So, maybe leave her? I would.

THE HUSBAND: Not today! And never will I ever go astray.

ROGER: Explain.

THE HUSBAND: I'm gonna do that right now. Hey! ⟨Why do you think? I am a masochist![10]⟩ Besides, I like making her miserable. It's one of my turn-ons.

So, never will I ever go astray,
were she a hundred times more uppity.

ROGER: And that, my friend, is spoken reasonably and, if I may, of sound mind and body. ⟨I mean: every time I think about your wife . . . ⟩ Bless my soul, she's one of a kind. There's no better woman in the whole wide world, ⟨unless, of course, I'm mistaken⟩.

THE HUSBAND: If you say so.

ROGER: I *did* say so: the day you first signed off on her.

⟨**THE HUSBAND:** Oh, yeah? What gave you your first clue?

ROGER: It was what *she* did when she signed off on *you*.⟩

THE HUSBAND: And what was it she did again, the little female? [I can't hear you.][11]

ROGER: ⟨She let you off easy: gave you exceptionally favorable terms, which was very generous of her, by the way. As for you:⟩ I'm assuming that you

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too have acted accordingly and upheld your end of the bargain? ⟨You're in full compliance, correct? You've fulfilled all the terms and delivered on your promise?⟩

THE HUSBAND: To tell you the truth, ⟨neighbor⟩, seeing as you're my best friend and all, ⟨I've got a little confession to make.⟩ I might as well just come right out and tell you that . . . I haven't laid out a damn thing ever since! She can wait and whistle. [Screw the checks and balances!]

ROGER: ⟨What? Have you no scruples, man? Have you no shame? If nothing else,⟩ doesn't the matter weigh heavily upon your conscience? For God ordained and established marriage in order to form a more perfect and pleasurable union: for the mutual benefit and satisfaction of both parties. It's called consortium; and, you, my friend, have got a balance due. Now, beware, for the reckoning is nigh! Next thing you know, it's Default Judgment Day!

THE HUSBAND: And *I'm* not *satisfied* with that answer! So, knock it the hell off with the preaching already. I know the score, just like I know exactly what to do here. [*He gestures toward his genitalia.*] Stiff her.

[Just let 'em try to get the goods on me!] I can make this whole thing disappear any time I want and get off scot free.[12]

ROGER: ⟨But what if she sues you?⟩ [Pay attention, man:] she *is* suing you. She's going to seize your assets. [Have you even looked at the script?]

THE HUSBAND: So what? [Never give in, never pay up!] I'll give her the goods, all right. I could always sign everything over to her or . . . I can countersue or—wait!—I've got it! I'll declare bankruptcy ⟨on her⟩. There you go! The good old last resort! [We call it the art of the steal.]

[Weary of waiting, Alexis and Colette leave the house to go find the Marshal, who is now close enough to Roger and the Husband to overhear their conversation.]

ROGER: Yes, but the Judge might not even have room on the docket and—in the name of Saint Johnson!—I don't know that he'd even allow it.

THE HUSBAND: And why the hell not?

ROGER: Surely you know that, in claims of bankruptcy, there's a change of venue. The whole thing gets moved to civil court—even for members of the clergy—and it's all over in a flash. ⟨Plus, that bankruptcy declaration is by no means a done deal,⟩ especially when, as in the present case, there's suspicion of fraud. [*Loudly*] Ahem.

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[SCENE 4]

THE MARSHAL: That's my cue! Better get my act together.

Sorry to interrupt this little debate here, gents, but, begging Your Lordship's pardon and all, I'd like a private word with you, sir, about a certain *boner* of contention.

[*To the audience*] ⟨Ain't like I'm asking for a bribe here or nothin'.⟩

THE HUSBAND: What's that? Speak up, man! [You can talk in front of Roger.]

[*Gesturing toward the audience*] ⟨And, dude: they can hardly hear you in the back.⟩ Now, state your business!

Don't tell me, let me guess: it's *Madame*.

THE MARSHAL: ⟨Good guess.⟩ You better believe it's *Madame* sent me. I'm at your service 'cause . . . [*brandishing his papers*] you've been served! There you go! Summons and complaint: "You are hereby ordered to appear without fail tomorrow," at which time, you shall be *arranged* and hear the charges brought against you. The whole bill o' particulars. ⟨Little lady means business too. And is she ever gonna hold your feet to the fire.⟩

THE HUSBAND: [*Refusing service*] Down, boy! Just lemme go have a word with her.

[*To Roger*] What do you say, neighbor? You and me? Let's do it! ⟨I know exactly what to say to calm her down,⟩ I do solemnly swear. Just you wait and see. I'll sort her out in no time. *Ipso facto.*

THE MARSHAL: [*He tries again to serve him.*] ⟨What she's *allegationing* is that all she ever gets outta you is an argument in *loo* of payment.⟩ She's a pretty little thing too—price above rubies—but still waters, they do run deep. Unfortunately.

[The Marshal tosses the warrant at the Husband's feet.]

ROGER: Pretty as a picture. Indeed. And she'd shine like a star with a little less rub-a-dub-*drubbing*. [Or a little more of the right kind.] ⟨You know what? I'm willing to bet that *that's* what this warrant is all about.⟩

[Roger picks up the warrant.]

Now, be reasonable for once, would you, neighbor? If your conscience is bothering you even in the slightest, then ⟨take it from me: mend your ways and make good. Right this wrong! It might be far worse than you think.⟩

[*The Husband is silent.*] Make amends, I said. Admit you're wrong ⟨if you know what's good for you,⟩ or you'll rue the day.

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THE HUSBAND: Admit I'm wrong? I *am* wrong! But, in the name of Saint *Paul*yanna: I'm not fool enough to—. And, hey! I never laid a hand on her either! But I do believe she's gonna be pleased as punch next time she lays eyes on me. There you go: a little payback. I mean backpay. [*He makes an obscene gesture.*] *Res ipsa loquitur.* The *thingy* speaks for itself.

⟨So, come on, neighbor, what do you say? Be my pimp?⟩ I mean: Be my go-between? Help me get back with her, wouldya? Get her to come around? I'd be very much in your debt.

[*To the audience*] "In his debt!" Get it?

ROGER: I'm more than happy to do her—do *it*—*pro bono*; but. . . . [*He gestures toward the Marshal.*] Unless you're planning to pay up, it's a waste of time.

[*He reads the paperwork.*] From what I understand, "stiffing her" is the whole gist of the complaint:

"Whereas the debtor has failed to uphold the terms of the agreement," *et cetera, et cetera* . . .

"Whereas, unable to avail herself of any other remedy," and so on and so forth. . . .

"Whereas she has no other recourse but to make a demand for statutory relief and pursue you in a court of law. . . ."

THE HUSBAND: And yada, yada, yada. Get off my case.

[*Sarcastically*] She's in the right; I'm in the wrong. And how very, very wrong of me it would be—sinful, really—to suggest anything to the contrary.

ROGER: Well, then, get your house in order, man! You need to go find her and resolve this whole affair. But wait! Isn't that—? There she is, headed this way! And her chambermaid too, Colette.

Go on, man, get over there and start begging! Flattery'll get you everywhere. Give it all you've got or you're in danger—grave danger—of losing it all. I don't need to explain moral hazard to *you*, do I?

THE HUSBAND: [Dude. Gimme *some* credit.] All it takes to make peace is a little sweet talk. [Grab 'em by the pussy. Whatever.] She'll come around. Never fails. I'll just feed her a few lines and we'll be back together again in no time and all made up.

ROGER: [{*Aside*} Feed *her* a few lines! At least she's been to rehearsal. And she's not looking for any more lines of credit either.]

So, what are you waiting for? Get over there and say hello!

No, wait! she's coming over. Nicely now, for God's sake: "The Lord bless you and keep you, *Madame*," and so forth.⟩

THE HUSBAND: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I see her.

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[SCENE 5]

[Roger shoves the Husband repeatedly as Alexis and Colette draw near. The Marshal hangs back to observe.]

[THE HUSBAND]: God be with you, baby, and ⟨pardon the interruption, dear. No pressure here or anything but:⟩ I come before you, of my own free will and in a spirit of humility, in order to avoid . . . a trial. I freely admit that, uh, having failed heretofore to satisfy my debt, I have behaved most inconsiderately toward you.

Therefore, in acknowledgement of said debt and, in consideration of my obligations, duties, and interests, this I pray: I humbly beseech you to forgive it—forgive *me*—and I'll do better from now on, promise. I'll make it right. And I'll stick to the schedule too.⟩

What do you say? All is forgiven? Erase! Erase! Let's just wipe that slate clean and call me sorry. How about it?

[{*To the audience*} It's pray to pay, folks! Will she or won't she?]

⟨**ALEXIS:** Promissories, promissories© and no follow-through! That's how you roll. But enough is enough. I've decided. No more faith in words alone and that's final. You, sir, are all talk and no action.

ROGER: No, no, he'll do better from now on, I assure you. He has shared with me, *Madame*, his true intentions; and I too have given my own unvarnished opinion on the subject, all without dissimulation or simulation. There is no vast conspiracy here.

THE HUSBAND: I'll keep my promise this time, honest. Let's go kiss and make up. I'm totally up for it.

ALEXIS: From your lips to God's ear!⟩ And aren't you the sneaky one? But, Lord have mercy, if this is some kind of a joke, you better just come right out and say so.

[{*To Roger and/or the audience*} And, seriously: You think that moron's going to catch a reference to Baudrillard?][13]

THE HUSBAND: It's only right and fair that I pay you back, which is precisely what I intend to do.

[*To the audience*] [Necessity *is*, after all, the mother of intention.]

COLETTE: And we all know what the path to hell's paved with. Check out your fake Christian charity right there! More like the *motherfucker* of invention.

THE MARSHAL: No, it's true! He's telling the truth. That's why I brung him.

ALEXIS: Thank you for all your trouble, Officer, but I know very well that I won't be collecting a thing off him. He's a deadbeat.

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[*She brandishes a law book and her marriage contract.*] See here, under "Breach of Promise?" [People, people! This is Contracts 101!] Now read this: "And in the event of default, *et cetera*, *et cetera*. . . ." You know what they say: "to promise and give nothing is to comfort a fool." [And I am nobody's fool!]

ROGER: And *I'll* be damned [if I don't see the two of you reconciled!] You're both getting satisfaction or she can go straight to hell!

[*To the audience*] Those two deserve each other.

THE HUSBAND: Oh, come on now, sweetheart, ⟨I'll keep my promise this time and play along, honest.⟩ Besides, it's almost Mardi Gras! Bye-bye Lent, hello party! Let's rock 'n' roll.

ALEXIS: In the name of Saint Johnson, from your lips to God's ear!

ROGER: He'll be sweeter than honey ⟨too⟩.

COLETTE: And, milady, bitter as Gaul.© *Not.* It doesn't take much to make her happy. ⟨There's no better woman anywhere.⟩

[Here begins an aggressive comédie-ballet *between Roger and Colette, which distracts them from what unfolds between the Husband and Alexis.]*

ROGER: [*To Colette*] ⟨And what the hell is it to you?⟩ Since when is it *your* business to come between husband and wife? Stay the hell out of it!

THE HUSBAND: [*To Alexis*] It's high time we cleared the air. How's about a little change of scene?

ROGER: [*To Colette*] And what the hell is it to you?

⟨**COLETTE:** [*To Roger*] You talkin' to me, dick-brain? What's wrong with me praising the Mistress?

ROGER: Shut the hell up and let 'em reconcile or you'll be sorry.

COLETTE: Who's gonna make me? You? You think you scare me one damn bit?

THE HUSBAND: [*To Alexis*] What are we hanging around here for, dear? Let's get the hell outta here and consort.⟩

ALEXIS: [*To the Husband*] And who could blame us if we were to proceed to our *mutual* satisfaction? Let's do it. I do believe I feel a settlement coming on as we speak. Shall we?

ROGER: [*To Colette*] [No, really!] Since when is it *your* business to come between husband and wife? Stay the hell out of it, I said!

COLETTE: [*To Roger*] *You* stay the hell out of it! What the fuck are you gonna do about it anyway, you prick? I will say my piece!

⟨[**THE HUSBAND:** Indeed. Let's proceed to our *mutual* satisfaction. Shall we go, dear?]

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ALEXIS: Right there. That's what I'm talking about. No more anger and unpleasantness. Let's go deal with that *payback* right now. We'll put the whole thing behind you.⟩

[Exit the couple.]

ROGER: You'll just lie, girl!

COLETTE: And you'll shut up, boy!

ROGER: No, you!

COLETTE: [No, you!] In the name of Saint Johnson, are you ever gonna be sorry now. I *will* say my piece!

ROGER: [Any peace but *your* fuckin' piece!] You lie, girl!

COLETTE: [Shut up, *boy*,] and hold your own goddamn piece! Watch out! [*She takes a swing at him.*]

ROGER: Hey! What the hell are you hitting me for?

COLETTE: I *will* say my piece!

ROGER: You lie, girl!

COLETTE: You shut up, *boy*!

ROGER: No, you.

THE MARSHAL: [{*To Everyone*} No, *all* of you!] And nuts to all of us!

[{*Histrionically again*} Look! Over there!] Your whole argument ain't worth a hill o' beans. They're back together.

Pity the fool who comes between friends, [women,] and children. What a scam! And don't try this at home either, folks—it's unworthy of you—plus, there's no guarantee this kinda thing won't happen to you.

Pity the fool who comes between friends, [women,] and children.

ROGER: [A bit over the top again, no?] And would you look at that! ⟨They went out the back way, and you better believe it's to seal the deal so that, this time, it sticks. That, ladies and gentlemen, is how you calm a litigious woman down. They're back together now.⟩

As for us, we can catch up with them or we can move along but, either way, here's the moral of the story:

[You think you got the tiger by the tail! You've probably got a wolf without a foot!] And speaking of *lupus in fabula*: Is this shaping up to be a *fabulous* ending or what?

COLETTE: Pity the fool who comes between friends, [women,] children, and [halfwits!] because:

I'm telling you, folks, don't you fall for a scam
'cause *half*-wits will travel and we're on the lam.]

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THE MARSHAL:

We'll banish all discord, folks, let's get along.
Hey! What do you say if we all sing a song?

ROGER:

A song's for the best. You can never go wrong!
⟨Together again, Ladies and Gentlemen!⟩[14]

⟨THE MARSHAL:

That's enough! They can see they're together again.
Nothin' left but the moral: whatever you do,
with whatever is owing, men, just pay your dues.
Deposits like clockwork! Hey, gents, pay to play!
No arrears. That's what keeps the gals happy these days.
Time to settle the score. Hey! I'm talking to you!
That's the *score*—hear me, Maestro?—a song of adieu![15]⟩

[They all sing.]
The End

NOTES

1. It is unlikely, albeit not impossible, that a husband would pay a dowry. Per Reyerson, a groom who had committed rape or kidnapping might be required to pay one in order to secure any or all of the dowry that his wife had brought into the marriage. Those funds would then accrue to her benefit in the event of his death ("Betrothal and Marriage").

2. Compare Rousset, 107–8, e.g., with Damhouder, *Practique judiciaire*, chaps. 36 and 37, pp. 344–46; below, note 8. My interpolations of noteworthy variants from Rousset are marked with angle brackets ("ABT," § "Editions"). *Novel dessaisin*, a term known in twelfth-century English property law, referred to the recovery of property to which someone else had laid claim.

3. The Husband's status and the question of venue are further muddled by Roger's allusion to a *debte privilegiée* (1: 122): i.e., the "privilege" or power of an ecclesiastical judge to adjudicate a civil matter.

4. The lyrics follow the stage direction, *Le Mari commence une chanson à plaisir: J'ay fait amye nouvellement / Qui porte un assez beau maintient; / Elle m'ayme parfaitement. / J'ay faict amye nouvellement. / Son petit cas tout bellement, / Le mieulx que*

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je peus, j'entretient. / J'ay faict amye nouvellement / Qui porte un assez beau maintient (*ATF*, 1 : 111; with a similar version in Rousset, 97–98). See also *MFST*, 188. Since the Husband and Roger perform different renditions of a song in Scene 3, it's appropriate that they do so here as well.

5. Alexis twice invokes a promise made not to herself but to *Colette: qu'il ne* te *tiendroit point promesse* (*RBM*, fol. 1; *ATF*, 1: 111–12; my emphasis), which is probably an error. I'm with Rousset—and with Martin, who corrects it silently (*SFQS*, vv. 10, 16)—that she likely means his promise *to me*. But we cannot discount the possibility that the Husband has promised something to Colette as well: possibly as a result of his abuse of her. (Compare her with Mandy in *Confession Follies* [*ID*, #5].) Compare also the somewhat more elegant *Quantes fois il a rendu?* (*ATF*, 1: 111) with the *Quantes-fois l'a-il fait, maistresse?* (Rousset, 98). Additionally, Colette is trickier in Rousset and more inclined toward violence (*ATF*, 1: 112 vs. Rousset, 98–99).

6. Another musicopoetic exchange varies between versions: *Helas! c'estoit un grand plaisir* or *un beau plaisir* or *tant c'est un grand plaisir* followed by *J'en suis au mourir* (1: 114) vs. three iterations of *Las! ce seroit tout mon desir* (Rousset, 101). Consider an update along the lines of "Anticipation"© or "Those Were the Days."© Any number of sensibilities fit Colette: "Whatchoo talkin' about?," "Seriously?," "Whatever do you mean?," "I beg your pardon," etc.

7. The male object of desire here is nothing if not confused and confusing. Are the women referring to Alexis's ideal suitor and potential lover (Rousset, 102–3), to the bad husband (*ATF*, 1: 115), or to both? One thing is clear: the *honnête homme* of the *RBM* only, an expression often translated as "Renaissance man," is there for the punning: *un monsieur si terrible sire*, followed by Colette's *un tres honneste seigneur*.

8. Here is the more extensive legalese for the *complainte en nouvelleté* in Rousset: *Icy n'eschet telle sentence, / Car si vous avez bien ouï, / Madame un seul jour n'a jouï / De son mary toute l'année, / Pource en vain seroit intentée, /* La complainte en nouvelleté, */ Qui n'a lieu quand on a esté /* Un an entier sans jouyssance, */ Et tout ce qu'elle peut faire en ce, / Est d'intenter le petitoire, / Auquel obtenant, ait memoire / De ne souffrir jusqu'au mourir / Tel cessement à l'advenir: / Autrement qu'elle fasse estat, / De perdre ses droits tout à plat. / Je vous prie la negligence / Laisser un an en surcreance, / Ce qu'on doit payer tous les jours* (107–8; my emphasis). Indeed, the issue comes up in the next paragraph of the Damhouder passage cited above: *Mais ceci est à noter és susdictes saisines, qu'il n'i a nulle d'elles qui puisse à aucun donner actuelle possession sans prise de possession ou investure*, ou sans occupation d'an & jour (*Practique Judiciaire*, chap. 36.9; p. 39; my emphasis). For his own part, Martin includes with his edition of our play one of Martial Auvergne's *Arrests d'Amour* (#53) on the selfsame subject: "*Arrest d'Amours donné sur le règlement des arrérages requis par les femmes à l'encontre de leurs mariz*" (*Les Arrests d'amour*, 481–500).

9. Here is the callout to "*Celle qui m'a demandé*" (1: 120; Rousset, 109), which, as in the opening song, is ambiguous regarding who is doing—or leaving—whom. In Rousset, Roger says *Tu la laisseras*—the *Husband* will leave Alexis—but, in the *RBM*, it's "*I*

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would leave her" (*Je la laisserois*). Regardless, this is what they're singing: *Celle à qui m'amour donneray, / Jamais ne l'abandonneray, / Feust elle cent fois plus hautaine* (109). I've amplified it with some of the remaining lyrics: *Celle qui m'a demandé / Argent pour estre m'amye, / El m'a fait grant villenye: / Jamès je ne l'aymeray. / Et bon gré en ait ma vie! / Lui fault-il prendre retour? / Ne luy doibt-il pas suffire / Si je luy donne m'amour?/ Je la quicte en bonne foy / Et feray une aultre amye, / Puis qu'el[le] demande partie / D'argent qu'avon elle et moy.* These have been recorded, e.g., by Sonia Malkine, with the text and translation appearing here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1fnmAnEvyaU (accessed 1 October 2022). Alternatively, you might consider some postmedieval songs: "If Ever Would I Leave Her,"© "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off,"© etc.

10. We find two opposite readings of who is suffering: *J'ay plaisir à* luy *faire peine* (1: 121) vs. *Je treuve plaisir en* ma *peine* (Rousset, 109) (my emphases).

11. Anatomically, this is *la bonne fumelle* (1: 121), reminiscent of the birdbrained gender check of the cuckoo in *For the Birds* (*HD*, 134; 457n). Again: the key contractual verb is *appoincter: Je le dys la premiere foys / Que vous appointactes à elle* (1: 121).

12. At 1: 122, feel free to add: "Hell, I could shoot people on Fifth Avenue if I felt like it."

13. Yes, that really was a reference to *simulation* (Rousset, 115); plus, it's hard not to hear echoes of Coquillart's female litigator, "La Rusée," of the famous *Plaidoyé d'entre la Simple et la Rusée* (e.g., *ROMD*, 233–43).

14. Here is the moral of our story, as expressed by the Marshal, Colette, and Roger, in the form of another song and dance: *Fol est qui se mesle d'amis / Et d'enfans; c'est abusion; / A gens de bien n'est point promis. / Fol est qui se mesle d'amis. / Allons après; c'est le loup pris; / C'est pour toute conclusion. / Fol est qui se mesle d'amis / Et d'enfans; c'est abusion; / Pour oster la d[i]vision, / Chantons une chanson ensemble. / C'est le meilleur, comme il me semble* (1: 126–27).

15. *Il suffit, puis qu'il son amis, / Sans outre nous en empescher: / Mais ceste exemple veut toucher: / Qu'il faut payer les arrerages / Aux femmes en tous mariages, / De ce vous vueille souvenir, / Adieu jusques au revenir* (Rousset, 117). For a closing number, you might try "Don't Leave Me This Way,"© the refrain of which is most apt, i.e., "Come satisfy me."

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3.

The Farce of the Washtub

A New Translation
[La Farce du Cuvier]

CAST OF CHARACTERS

JACKO (Jacquinot)
[JO-JO,] the WIFE (La Femme)
and JACKIE, his MOTHER-IN-LAW (Jacquette)

PRODUCTION NOTES

Preserved in both the *RBM* (#4) and the *Recueil de Copenhagen* in both an A- and a B-version (Picot and Nyrop, 1–24), the *Farce nouvelle très bonne et fort joyeuse du Cuvier* is one of the best known and most beloved of the repertoire. No surprise, then, to find multiple editions and translations (*RF*, 3: 19–21). Middle French editions include: *ATF*, 1: 94–110; *RF*, 3: 21–63; *TFR*, 192–98; *SFQS* (https://sottiesetfarces.wordpress.com/2020/10/26/le-cuvier); Philipot, *Trois farces* (27–59; 121–40); Mortier, *Farces du Moyen Age* (219–73); Bowen, *Four Farces* (15–34; 127–30); Harden, *Trois pièces médiévales* (83–97); and two freestanding *Farces du Cuvier* by Hindley and by Gassies des Brulies. I primarily follow *RBM*, #4, which is comprised of 332 octosyllabic verses; but, on occasion, I retain some of the echolalia and line reassignments of the Copenhagen texts, marked here with the usual angle brackets. Summarized by Petit de Julleville (*RTC*, 130–31) and by Faivre (*Répertoire*, 128–32), *The Washtub* was also translated into modern French by Tissier (*FFMA*, 1: 243–57), by Faivre (*Farces*, 1: 67–120), and by Robert-Busquet (*Farces du Moyen Age*, 89–98), as well as into English: into prose by Oscar Mandel (*FCMF*, 143–50) and into verse by Barnard Hewitt (*In the Suds*). Our anonymous play, possibly but not indubitably the work of a Basochien (*RF*, 3: 23), was first published in Lyon

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sometime between 1532 and 1550 (*RF*, 3: 22–23). Martin, for one, prefers to set the date at around 1545, at least seventy years after its creation (*SFQS*, Préf.).[1]

In a story of a postnuptial contract gone wrong, *The Washtub* reprises this eternal question: *What is more important? The letter or the spirit of the law?* An unnamed taskmaster wife (here, "Jo-Jo"), her harridan mom, Jackie (Jacquette), and the proverbial henpecked husband, Jacko (Jacquinot), are about to find out. If only Jo-Jo had thought to make room in her renegotiated domestic accord for that all-important legal boilerplate, "*including but not limited to*." But she didn't; and the result makes for a medieval forerunner of a favorite *Brady Bunch* episode about adherence to one's "exact words" ("Greg Gets Grounded" of 19 January 1973). But why, you might ask, rewrite the rules of marital engagement in the first place?

Because the relative newlywed Jo-Jo has already had enough. Not only does she appear to have brought more into the marriage than her miserable failure of a life mate: like so many of his *confrères*, Jacko can't so much as keep his end up. Legal redress is *de rigueur*; so, the two women coerce Jacko into executing and signing a new arrangement by which he shall thenceforth perform all the duties typically assigned to the wife. Indeed, we bear witness to not one but three recitals of those duly enumerated and seemingly endless tasks: a veritable laundry list, as it were, of housekeeping, childcare, cooking, baking, cleaning, washing (a pile of laundry as disgusting as that of *Shit for Brains* [*RC*, #13; *FF*, #8]), warming up Jo-Jo's garments by the fire (vice versa in *Marriage with a Grain of Salt* [*HD*, 409]), and, of course, *bedroom duty*. It's a clever moment of metacommentary on several levels in that many of the verbs at issue have legal resonances. "Proofing," for instance, denotes the final rinse of the dough before baking; *mousture* refers to both milling grain and punishing someone in kind (1: 37); and the delicious *coquillart* (1: 40) is a fool, a potential cuckold, and a wolf in pilgrim's clothing, but it's also Guillaume *Coquillart*, the author of the quintessentially legalistic *Plaidoyé d'entre la Simple et la Rusée* (*ROMD*, 233–43; below, note 6). More clever still: as we shall see in *Runaway Groom* (#12), the play's spectators are conscripted into roles of their own as the witnesses before whom the foreswearing of an agreement had the force of law (Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 260–78). But there's always a loophole somewhere, right?

Even while Jacko is still taking dictation and committing the new provisions to writing, changes to the original sneak in. Intriguingly enough, those absences are amplified by numerous orphaned rhymes that helpfully call our attention to precisely what is *not* there. Although Tissier speculates that

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the various emendations and omissions might be explained by Jacko's citing the clauses from his imperfect memory (*RF*, 3: 66n), it all depends on how smart—or stupid—one determines Jacko to be (or, for that matter, how attentive—or inattentive—one believes the author or the copyist to have been). He and his wife are literate, after all. We thus do well to wonder: Are his manipulations the deliberate acts of a schemer? When the couple is wringing out sheets and Jo-Jo tumbles headlong into the titular washtub, is it because Jacko trips her? Is the play's tipping point a literal *tripping* point plotted all along by a husband who realizes that a missing "rescue-your-wife" clause could be to his advantage?

Whatever answer is ultimately revealed by dramaturgy, everything new is old again when farce's trademark misogynistic world order is restored. Throw in a little baptism motif, cleverly teased out by Faivre (*Répertoire*, 130), a little *comédie-ballet*, or a few self-styled, *commedia-dell'arte*–like human puppets (*FCMA*, 140–41), and we've got ourselves a *Taming of the Shrew*. In the end (about which Tissier provides an article-length footnote [*RF*, 3: 75n–78n]), perhaps what we've got is a savvy, tongue-in-cheek Kate-like character who winks ironically at the crowd. Perhaps she accepts a return to the status quo in letter but not in spirit. Jo-Jo is as disinclined to serve Jacko as Jacko is to serve Jo-Jo. He said as much early on: *plus ne veuil estre son varlet* (1: 47). The thing is: the expression, *je suis votre valet* means something on the order of: "Your servant, sir. *Not*." One certainly has the impression that the end is the beginning and that, soon enough, the *sheet* will hit the fan.

Sets, Costumes, or Props

Needless to say, the key prop—a virtual set unto itself—is the washtub, the site of Jo-Jo's comeuppance (*go-downance*?). Laundry day, recalls Tissier, was a big deal, and a washtub itself could be massive: up to six feet tall and five feet in diameter (*RF*, 3: 29–31), necessitating a stool to reach the top (*RF*, 3: 61n). Conveniently for Jo-Jo, it would also come equipped with a bat, images of which can be viewed here: https://historicalcostumesbydft.blogspot.com/2016/04/laundry-in-bygone-eras.html (accessed 17 May 2021). My friend, Mario Longtin ingeniously suggests a recessed space akin to a trap door where Jo-Jo could get stuck. Otherwise, the recitals of the contract practically double as a props list or, minimally, as guidance for set design: pots and pans, bowls, rolling pins, etc. And don't forget the implements for legal drafting, such as pens, scrolls, quills, or a clipboard.

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"A Change Is Gonna Come." By Sam Cooke.[2]

"Little Less Talk and a Lot More Action." By Keith W. Hinton and Jimmy Alan Stewart. BMI Work #880887.

"Bat Out of Hell." By James Richard Steinman. BMI Work #90098.

"Signed, Sealed, Delivered, I'm Yours." By Lee Garrett, Lula Mae Hardaway, Stevie Wonder, and Syreeta Wright. ASCAP Work ID: 490293528.

"Ding-Dong! The Witch Is Dead." By Harold Arlen and E. Y. Harburg. ASCAP Work ID: 340037463.

"Time of the Season." By Rod Argent. BMI Work #1516893.

"Don't Leave Me This Way." By Kenneth Gamble, Cary Grant Gilbert, and Leon Huff. BMI Work #323300.

[SCENE 1]

[At the home of Jacko and Jo-Jo]

Enter **JACKO:** [So, one guy says to the other: "My wife's an angel." Other guy goes: "Lucky you. *Mine* is still alive." Wanna know what, folks?]

To hell with this! Why'd I get hitched for no port in this marriage storm of pain and suff'ring? That's the norm, folks: when it rains, it pours. That witch attacks! Pop goes the weasel, which just makes the one mad, then the other. If it's not one thing, it's her mother! Wife doubles down; the mom weighs in, and then, double trouble again! She plots, she schemes, she tortures me. ⟨No mark is easier than me.⟩ She casts the first stone . . . in my face! One screams; the other's on my case. One rages; other hacks away on weekdays, Sundays, holidays. . . . I never get a moment's peace. There's no reprieve, there's no release, ⟨and, once you're trapped, there's no way out! That's what marriage is all about.⟩ Can't get ahead, and that's no fun. But—damn!—a change is gonna come© and, by God's holy name, I swear: [you're goin' down, you shrew. Beware!] It's time to get back at my spouse. I *will* be master of this house . . . if I try.[3]

[**JO-JO,**] **THE WIFE:** What's that? *I'm* on trial? ⟨I dare you to repeat that, shmuck.⟩ You'll shut up if you know what's good for you.

[Enter Jackie.]

JACKIE, THE MOTHER-IN-LAW: What's going on, you two? Trouble in paradise?[4]

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JO-JO: ⟨Going on? Jesus, Mom, what do you think? It's this damn fool who can't do anything right! Like *he*'s the injured party!⟩ Never gives a second thought to what's needed in this household.

What? You think this joint just runs itself?

JACKIE: Lord have mercy, there's no excuse for that! None whatsoever. Mary, Mother of God, a man must obey his wife, as any good husband should. [No ifs, ands, or buttheads,] lest she beat you from time to time if—[*with a menacing gesture*]—you should happen to fall short. ⟨So what if she socks you one—or two or three—when you're wrong? You'll just have to put up with it.⟩

JACKO: Ha, ha, ha, that's a good one. ⟨The Devil himself wouldn't put up with *that* and⟩—. Know what? Me neither! Not on your life.[5]

JACKIE: Oh, no? And why the hell not? Mary, Mother of—! You think she means you any harm when she has to discipline and punish you every now and then? For goodness' sake, it's a sign of love!

JACKO: [*To the audience*] And the hits just keep on comin'!

Articulate as always, Mama Jackie, but—. Talk about reading the signs! ⟨To hell with that kinda love! I'll take a little less talk and a lot *less* action,© thank you very much.⟩ Besides, this is none of your business; so, butt out! And, by the by: I'm not entirely sure I caught your meaning just then. [What are you trying to prove anyhow?]

JACKIE: [My case! And I'll give you a sign in a minute! What? You need a goddamn *explication de texte* there, Jackass?]

Fine. What I *mean* is this: it's the first year of marriage is all. ⟨There's a lot to put up with.⟩ [*She makes an obscene gesture.*] Catch my meaning now, my dear John?

JACKO: [*Also to the audience*] John? In the name of Saint Paul the Apostle! [I'm her client now?]

What's up with the formalities all of a sudden? The name's "Jack": "Jacko" to my friends. Don't tell me you forgot.

JACKIE: No, no, dear, not at all. But ⟨a John in the hand is worth two in the bush.⟩ Besides, it says "John" on the marriage license.

JACKO: Ohmigod, for all the good it did me. Ouch.

JACKIE: That's the fact, Jack! And I'd also say, dear, that you hit the *jack*pot! You've got it real good.

JACKO: Good? Good and miserable's more like. In the name of Saint George! Just slit my throat, why don'tcha, dragon lady! Mary, Mother of—! Good, is it?

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JO-JO: Wives must be obeyed and that's all there is to it. Our wish is your command. ⟨It's all part of the teachings of the Church.⟩

JACKO: Ha! Is that so? Well, in the name of *Saint* John, she commands far too many tasks, and *that's* the fact, Jackie.

JACKIE: So, the better to remember them, you'll make a list. You'll memorialize all your assigned tasks in writing. You'll take it all down on your own personal scroll. Whatever she wants.

JACKO: Dream on, lady!

[*Aside*] Just what I need: a list.

[Jo-Jo makes another menacing gesture.]

Sure, fine by me. I'll just get started on that dictation right now.

JO-JO: So, write! And it better be legible too because I'll be checking your work. Now, take this down:

First: you shall obey me at all times. Nor shall you ever disobey in your execution of my will.

JACKO: Jesus H. Christ! I'll do no such thing. Forget it!

[Jo-Jo makes yet another menacing gesture.]

Unless it's something reasonable.

JO-JO: So, what are you waiting for? Take this down too:

In order that I should cease to be aggrieved—are you *trying* to piss me off here?—you shall always be the first to rise for morning chores. And you won't be giving me an argument about it either.

JACKO: Mary, Mother of—! I object! There will be no such clause! Get up first? What the hell for?

JO-JO: So you can warm my slip by the fire.

⟨**JACKO:** You have *got* to be kidding.

JO-JO: Keeps the wives warm. Everybody's doing it these days.

Do I have to take my belt off?⟩

JACKO: Oh really? You're not seriously trying to tell me—. [*Also to the audience*] That's customary, is it?

JO-JO: The custom, the law, and the customary law! It's common practice, don'tcha know? And *practice* makes perfect!

JACKIE: Write!

JO-JO: Take it down, Jacky-Boy.

JACKO: Gimme a break. I'm still on the first word here. And quit rushing me, Jeez.

JO-JO: If the baby gets up in the middle of the night, which has, after all, been known to happen from time to time, your duties shall be as follows:

You shall promptly get up and rock him. Pick him up, walk him

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around the room, tend to him, regardless of the hour. Even if it's midnight.

JACKO: [*To the audience*] That's no fun.

I don't believe I'd care to do that. It ain't fittin'. ⟨I don't know nothin' 'bout rockin' no babies.⟩

JO-JO: Write!

JACKO: [*To the audience*] Her cup runneth over.

But there's no room on the page here, honest. What am I supposed to do? Write in the margins?

[*Another menacing gesture from Jo-Jo*] What was it you wanted me to write again, dear?

JO-JO: Take it down or I'll tan your hide. [*She lunges for his posterior.*]

JACKO: [I'll just turn the other cheek.]

There's always the verso, I guess. [You know: The flipside?]

JACKIE: Next, ⟨when it's time to dine⟩, you shall be required to do the following:

Knead, proof, and bake . . .

JO-JO: Sift, wash, and wring. [Spritz, hang, and beat: the rug, that is!] . . .

JACKIE: Gallop and run: you'll come and go—and fast!—like a bat outta hell© . . .

JO-JO: Heat up the oven, make the bread . . .

JACKIE: Bring all the grain down to the mill . . .

JO-JO: At dawn, get up to make the bed on penalty of being whipped.

JACKIE: And, after that, put up the stew and keep the kitchen spic and span.[6]

JACKO: Write all that down? I can't keep up. I didn't go to steno school. Slow down! Just take it word by word.

JACKIE: So, move it, Jacko! Go on, write!

Knead . . .

JO-JO: Proof . . .

JACKO: And bake . . .

JO-JO: Sift . . .

JACKIE: Wash . . .

JO-JO: And *cook*.[7]

JACKO: Wash what?

JACKIE: The pots and pans. What else?

JACKO: Hold on! Don't be in such a rush: "The pots and pans . . ."

JO-JO: And, next, the bowls.

JACKO: Jesus H. Christ! A shmuck like me can't possibly retain all that.

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JO-JO: So take it down—you hear?—and you'll remember. For that is my wish.

JACKO: Wash what again?

[*Aside*] *You* wash it!

JO-JO: What? No backtalk! Wash the baby's shitty bunting, Jack-*shmo*! Off you'll go down to the river. Now *bunt* out.

JACKO: Over my dead body! And I'll thank you, *Madame*, to keep a civil tongue in your head. Clause is way off too: in letter, spirit, and in smell!

JO-JO: Just take it down, Jackass! Chop-chop! What? It's beneath you, fool?

JACKO: Jesus H. Christ! I won't sign off on this whole pack of lies, I swear.

JO-JO: You *will*! You're really asking for it now. I'll beat you to a pulp. [*She moves to hit him.*]

JACKO: Okay, okay! It's going in. Let's drop it. And no more debate.

JO-JO: A final detail to clean up, namely: the house. You shall assist with wringing out the sheets at the washtub. On the double. We'll do the laundry. Now! And I'll be watching you like a hawk. Take this. [*She gives him a hairnet.*]

Write! [*She lands a blow.*]

JACKO: It's there already! Ow!

JACKIE: There's one more thing to do, albeit on the fly, from time to time, *between* the sheets. You know: do *it*.

JACKO: You'll get your shtup two weeks from now, maybe a month, if I feel like.

JO-JO: Five or six times per day is the bare minimum, in my judgment.

JACKO: Good God Almighty, not a chance, dragon lady! Five or six times? Not goin' in! Five or six? Not two or three? I won't sign off.

JO-JO: Well, that's a fine how-do-you-don't! Know what? Screw you! Useless pussy.

JACKO: [*Aside*] Pussy-whipped's more like!

Day in, day out, why put up with this kind of mistreatment from Miss Demeanor over there? [What kinda mock court does she think she's running 'round here anyway?] Jesus H. Christ, there's not a man alive who's ever gonna catch a break! Know why? Same lesson drummed into our heads nonstop.

JO-JO: It's going in! For such is our pleasure. Now hurry up and sign.[8]

[After more menacing gestures from Jo-Jo, he signs under duress but with great ceremony.]

JACKO: Fine. Here you go: signed, sealed, delivered.© Careful not to lose it now 'cause, heretofore, on penalty of death by hanging, I've foresworn that never shall I ever do a single thing not on my list.

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JACKIE: Four corners of this contract and that's it. [*Manifesting great satisfaction, she prepares to depart.*]

JO-JO: Okay, Mom. Go with God.

[Exit Jackie.]

[SCENE 2]

Speaking to Jacko

[JO-JO]: As for you: get your ass over here, for God's sake! Over here, I said! Laundry! Grab hold of your end! Let's see a little elbow grease. It *is* one of the articles in the contract, you know.

JACKO: I'm not following. What is it exactly that *Madame* wishes to command?

JO-JO: Are you ever gonna get it now, Jackass! I'll slap you silly! I'm talking about hanging out the laundry, fool, or I'll hang *you* out to dry.

JACKO: Let's see: it isn't on my list.

JO-JO: Of course it is, [John].

JACKO: Again with the "John." Is not.

[{*To the audience*} Air my dirty laundry in public, is it?]

JO-JO: Is not? Is too! *Puh*-lease. It's right there. [*She grabs him.*] Read it and weep! And you can burn in hell too, boy!

JACKO: Ow! Ow! Okay, okay already. True enough. Right you are. Got it. I'll remember next time.

[She climbs onto a stool and extracts a sheet from the huge washtub to wring and hang.]

JO-JO: Here! Take the other end and pull! Pull, I said! Harder!

JACKO: Christ in the bucket! This laundry is disgusting. It smells like dirty diaper-droppings!

JO-JO: Hey, *Monsieur*! Eat shit, why don'tcha? Just follow my lead and do it correctly. And behave yourself.

JACKO: But I mean—. This is literally shit here, I swear! This is pathetic.

JO-JO: Keep it up and I'll really rub your nose in it. And don't you be thinking I'm making this shit up!

JACKO: The hell you say, woman! You'll do no such thing!

JO-JO: Oh yeah? Yo! Shit-for Brains! Feelin' cocky, is it, sir? Here you go: take a whiff o' this!

JACKO: Mary, Mother of—. Damn she-devil! Go to hell! You messed up all my clothes.

JO-JO: Knock it off with the excuses already. It's always something with you: every time we've got to get down to business! Now, hold on, dammit, and

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keep your end up! Get a grip before I wring your neck. Ring around the collar, ring around the collar![9]

[Jacko lets go of his end and Jo-Jo loses her grip.] She falls into the washtub.

Oh, Lord, in memory of me,
have mercy on my soul, I pray.
Help me, Lord! Get me out of here,
lest, in this tub, I die, defamed,
Come quick! Rescue your wife! Mayday!
Help me out, Jacky! I insist.[10]

JACKO: Let's see. . . . It isn't on my list.

JO-JO: Help! I'm over a barrel here! I'm terrified, dear. I need you! Come here! For God's sake, get me out of this.

JACKO: [*To the audience*] Drunk slut farted! See? Remember the meek? [*He smacks her on the butt.*] Turn the other cheek! Turn the other *fist*?

JO-JO: Oh, husband dear, please: save my life. I'm fainting here. I *am* your wife. Please! Lend a hand, I must insist.[11]

JACKO: Let's see. . . . It isn't on my list. Your list can follow you to hell!

JO-JO: Somebody! Anybody! Help! Death's coming to take me away!

Jacko reads his scroll.

JACKO: Knead, proof, and bake,
Sift, wash, and *cook* . . .

JO-JO: I'm fading fast. I'm dying here. The color's draining from my face.

JACKO: Hug, kiss, and *screw* . . .[12]

JO-JO: Quick! Save me! Now! [Can't you just read between the lines?]

JACKO: And come and go . . . gallop and run . . .

JO-JO: I'll never see another day.

JACKO: And heat the oven . . . make the bread . . .

JO-JO: Gimme your hand! The end is near.

JACKO: And bring the dough down to the mill . . .

JO-JO: You're meaner than a pit bull too.

JACKO: At sunrise, make the bed first thing . . .

JO-JO: Help! This look like some farce to you?

JACKO: And, after that, put up the stew . . .

JO-JO: Where's Mama Jackie? Mama? Help!

JACKO: And keep the kitchen spic and span . . .

JO-JO: Quick! Hurry and fetch me the priest!

JACKO: Case closed! I scoured this whole scroll. It's cut and dried; so, now hear this: there's no way *that* is on my list.

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JO-JO: Why not? Didn't you write it down?

JACKO: You didn't say. Wasn't your wish. I'd sooner leave you where you are. Frankly, my dear, go save yourself!

JO-JO: Then get some valet on the street! [{*Indicating the audience*} Or what about those guys out there?]

JACKO: There's no way *that* is on my list.

JO-JO: Darling, your hand! Quick! I'm too weak. I've fallen and I can't get up.

JACKO: "Darling?" Who, me? Your enemy? I'll kiss your dead face at the wake.

[SCENE 3]

[Enter Jackie.]

JACKIE: Knock, knock? Hello!

JACKO: Who's at the door? Who goes there?

JACKIE: Who do you think? Your drinking buddies? It is I, for God's sake, your family! Thought I'd pop by again to see if all was well. How are things?

JACKO: Couldn't be better, thanks, now that my wife is dead. I finally got my wish! Helluva legacy too. [Ding-dong, the witch is dead!©]

JACKIE: Wait, my daughter's been killed?

JACKO: Drowning in the suds as we speak.

JACKIE: Murderer! Monster! Assassin! What the hell are you saying?

JACKO: Our Father who art in Heaven—and our own Dennis too, patron saint of France—this I pray: may the Devil come here from hell today! Come here! Take 'er away![13] And bust her one in the gut too on her way down.

JACKIE: Oh, no! My daughter's passed away?

JACKO: [*He taunts her repeatedly by nodding "yes," then shaking his head "no," then nodding "yes" again.*] You got it, Jacks! So, she's wringing stuff out, right? She squats down—really got her panties in a twist now—and, then, boom! She flies off the handle again—only, this time, bitch can't get a grip, so she falls in ass-backwards. Over there.

JO-JO: Help! Is that you, Mom? [{*Coughing*} Reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated!] Come quick or I'm a goner! Save your daughter!

JACKIE: I'm on the case! Quick! A hand, please, Jacko.

⟨[*She attempts to help.*] Somebody's got to be the man around here.⟩

JACKO: There's no way *that* is on my list.

JACKIE: In point of fact, you're quite wrong about that.

JO-JO: Help me! Help!

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JACKIE: Damn lowlife! Are you just gonna let her die in there?

JACKO: That's the plan, yes. The hell with her! She stays right where she is, if I got anything to say about it. And I shall be her servant no longer, for such is not our pleasure.

JO-JO: Help me!

JACKO: Impossible. Not on the list! Can't find it anywhere.

JACKIE: Lord have mercy, Jacko, quit standing around. Help me get your wife to her feet.

JACKO: Don't hold your breath there, lady, because *that* I will never do, I swear: not without a promise that, [from this day forward,] I shall be the one to exercise dominion over all our worldly goods as master of this house.

JO-JO: If you could just *master*—. [Call me but servant and I'll be newly baptized! With all thy worldly goods, I'll thee endow,] I promise. Of my own free—. *Will* you get me outta here?

JACKO: After which, you shall do . . . ? What exactly? I can't hear you!

JO-JO: All the housework—I'll never ask you for another thing: not for as long as we both shall live. No more orders, I promise—. [Unless absolutely necessary . . . or under the most pressing circumstances . . . or extreme duress . . . or *force majeure*. . . .]

JACKO: Okeydokey, then! Up she goes. Hoist that *sale*. [*He starts to help Jo-Jo out.*]

But, wait: in the name of every saint we sing about at Mass, you better keep your promise, woman, just like you said—those exact words—for that is my wish.

JO-JO: Without objection. No argument from me, dear, never. No revisions, no amendments, no addenda, no encore performance, I promise.

[{*To the audience*} Unless maybe those folks out there would like a do-over?]

JACKO: Therefore, from this day forward, I shall be master of this house, inasmuch as my wife has allowed it.

JACKIE: When there's trouble at home, it's hard to be fruitful and multiply.

JACKO: [*With or without additional delaying tactics, he helps her out of the washtub.*] To which I would further submit, and I do hereby certify, that it is most unseemly that a woman should contrive to make a servant of her master, however foolish or unlearned he might be.

JO-JO: Which was a further mistake on my part, I'll grant you, as has been witnessed here today. I don't rightly know what I was thinking. And, furthermore, from this day forward, I shall dutifully apply myself to all

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the housework, with all due zeal, as your subordinate, as required by law. [Your servant, sir!]

JACKO: Good deal! If it holds, that is.

[See that, folks? And, just when a guy's ready to throw in the towel! Turns out I *will* live happily ever after: not a care in world!]

That's *happily*. That's worry-free. That's *sans souci*: "Basochily!"

JO-JO: ⟨I promise. Unconditionally.⟩ No worries: you can count on me to stick it—*to* it—as is right. You'll be the master, promise. [*Under her breath sarcastically*] *Right*—consider it—of this whole house.

JACKO: *Ergo*, I warrant, as the spouse, that I'll no longer make you mad.

[*To the audience*] The hidden meaning? Things got bad, but shrews, you see, can get set straight. I lost my mind, went crazy mad; but, in the end, the wife got had for having dared to subjugate a man like me. Let's celebrate, 'cause that was folly, pure delusion. Bye-bye, folks! That was the conclusion.

⟨JO-JO:

What in the world came over me?
I'm just *so* sorry, as you see!⟩[14]

[Possible closing music][15]
Here ends the Farce of the Washtub.
The End

NOTES

1. Critical opinion is divided about both the possible Picard origin of the play and its date of composition. Per Picot, e.g., it was written in the second half of the fifteenth century but, per Philipot, toward the close of that century. For a full explanation, see *FFMA*, 1: 245; *RF*, 3: 22–29; 10: 31.

2. As of this writing, "A Change Is Gonna Come" is not listed in Songview, but Cooke's current artistic affiliation is BMI under IPI #00006711415.

3. Even the first verse is an orphan, prompting Petit de Julleville's theory of a lost rhymed prologue (*RTC*, 131). Like the husband in the *Edict of Noée* (*RC*, #20; *FF*, 92), Jacko opens with this lament in Middle French, where I've filled in some of the blanks left by missing lines or haplographies (*ATF*, 1: 32–33). I reproduce a short excerpt only; see, e.g., here for the rest: https://sottiesetfarces.wordpress.com/2020/10/26/le-cuvier/. *Le grand dyable me mena bien / Qant je me mis en mariage; / Ce n'est que tempeste et orage, / On n'a que soucy et [que] peine. / Tousjours ma femme se demaine / Comme ung saillant, et puis sa mère / Affirme toujours la matière.*

4. This line (*RBM*, fol. 2) is wrongly attributed to Jacko in *ATF* (1: 33) and in many subsequent editions; see also *RF*, 3: 42n.

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5. Technically it's a day of *Jacko*'s life (*de ma vie* [1: 33]); but let's call this poetic foreshadowing.

6. Here is a sense of the Middle French, for which I've *not* resolved most of the orphaned rhymes in order to retain the rapid-fire, rhythmic dialogue between Jackie and Jo-Jo: *Boulenger, fournier et buer, / Bluter, laver, essanger, / Aller, venir, troter, courir, / Peine avoir comme Lucifer, / Faire le pain, chauffer le four, / Mener la mousture au moulin, / Faire le lict au plus matin, / Sur peine d'estre bien battu, / Et puis mettre le pot au feu, / Et tenir la cuisine nette* (*ATF*, 1: 37). I've accounted in a different way for part of the "wintry" variant in *Copenhagen*-B (13): *L'hyver, essanger et buer* (13; v. 99 and 113; below, note 9).

7. Here, the contract has already changed from *bluter*, *laver*, *essanger* (1: 37) to *bluter*, *laver*, *et cuire* (1: 38). I've marked these substitutions with italics. Tissier thinks it's a mistake (*RF*, 3: 53n); but I find these changes decisive and dispositive.

8. *Puisqu'il me plaist* (1: 40) seems evocative of the signature of Francis I, *car tel est notre plaisir*.

9. For the yucky reference to scabies (1: 42), I'm reminded of the classic 1970s ad campaign for Wisk laundry detergent. You can see it here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e3N_skYSGoY (accessed 28 December 2020). Alternatively, you could try a prelapsarian ballet that makes room for *l'hyver* of the *Copenhagen*-B variant with cold water (13; v. 99): "It's the time of the season for working"!©

10. After Jo-Jo falls into the washtub—*Elle chet en la cuve* (1: 42; *RBM*, fol. 5)—there ensues a lyrical deathbed—deathtub?—prayer and, possibly, a song (*RF*, 3: 63n): *Mon Dieu, soyez de moy recorps, / Ayez pitié de ma pouvre ame; / Aydez-moy à sortir dehors / Ou je mourray par grant diffame. / Jaquinot, secourez votre femme. / Tirez la hors de ce bacquet.*

11. As Jo-Jo sinks, the rhyme scheme accelerates with her distress: *Tant ce tonneau me presse, / J'en ay grant destresse; / Mon cueur est en presse. / Las, pour Dieu, que je soye ostée.* Jacko then responds*: La vieille vesse, / Tu n'es que une yvresse; / Retourne ta fesse / De l'aultre costé* (1: 43).

12. More subtle changes to the original contract emerge (1: 43), as above (note 6): Jacko eliminates the earlier "bat outta hell" (*peine avoir comme Lucifer*) and the threat of whipping (*sur peine d'estre bien battu*) (1: 37); plus, he introduces *baiser*, *acoller*, *fourbir*.

13. Here, as in *Basket Case* (#4), I borrow the motif from *Cooch E. Whippet* (*RC*, #41; *FF*, 355) about conjuring the Devil, real or ersatz.

14. In the *RBM,* the closing lines read: *Qui a voulu en fantasie / Me mettre en subjection. / Adieu; c'est pour conclusion* (1: 49). But I've gone with the *Copenhagen*-B conclusion: *Je crie mercy de ma folie; / Prenez en gré, je vous supplie* (45; vv. 321–22).

15. Depending on how you choose to read the ending, you might try changing up the refrain of "Don't Leave Me This Way:"© for "come satisfy me," substitute "come subjugate me."

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4.

Basket Case, or, *Marriage on the Rocks*

[La Farce de la Femme qui fut desrobée à son mari en sa hotte et mise une pierre en son lieu]

CAST OF CHARACTERS

FARMER JOHN FIELDING (Le Laboureur / Jehan des Prés)
JENNY, the WIFE (Jehannette)
BROTHER LONG-JOHN (Frère Frappart)
BROTHER JOHN, the CLERIC (Le Clerc)
[A small band of Minstrels]

PRODUCTION NOTES

The anonymous *Farce de la Femme qui fut desrobée à son mari en sa hotte et mise une pierre en son lieu* (*RC*, #23) was first edited by Cohen (*RC*, 179–85) and, later, as *Frère Frappart* by both Koopmans (*RFlorence*, 341–51) and Martin (*SFQS*: https://sottiesetfarces.wordpress.com/2019/04/01/frere-frappart/). At 399 octosyllabic verses, it is notable for its departure from the usual rhyming octosyllabic couplets in favor of a series of musical, albeit corrupt, set pieces such as *rondeaux* (*RC*, 185n; *SFQS*, Préf.). A summary appears in Faivre's *Répertoire* (146–67) but, beyond that, *Basket Case* has received scant critical attention and, to my knowledge, there is no translation into English or any other modern vernacular.

Remember the biblical lesson of Sodom and Gomorrah? You know: When God turned Lot's wife into a rock? *Wait . . . What?* "Brother Long-John" (Frère Frappart) makes a fine mess of it in this "immoralistic" tale of as many as three Johns. John #1 is "Farmer John Fielding" (Jehan des Prés, Le Laboureur), a jealous fool from a long line of them, including Cooch E. Whippet from the same *RC* (#64; *FF*, #11). In this instance, he happens to be jealous for cause. Good old Brother Long-John—also seen in the *RC*'s *Monk-ey Business* (#33;

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FF, #9)—might not technically be a "John" but, as a probable Franciscan (*SFQS*, Préf.), he'd at least be a john. He has designs on Farmer John's wife, who goes by the John-inspired name of "Jenny" (Jehan > Jehannette). With the assistance of his apprentice, seemingly John #3 and, here, "Brother John, the Cleric" (Le Clerc), the libidinous Long-John contrives to turn up at his prearranged assignation with Jenny. It won't be easy but, if you ask me, the more Johns, the merrier.[1]

Farmer John has decided that Jenny must accompany him to work, the better to keep an eye on her while he toils in the hemp fields. *Could it be that everybody is stoned?* Talented actress Jenny, however, claims that she can't walk, thereby launching the play's central piece of stage action. In glorious pantomime, Fielding will carry her in a basket which, in addition to echoing the fable of "The Miller, the Boy, and the Donkey," serves two principal purposes. On one hand, it embodies the clever wordplay on "carrying," "transporting," and being sexually "transported" (*porter*, *se porter*, *transporter*). On the other hand, it opens up all manner of possibilities for physical comedy with a *femme errant* (v. 111) or wandering adulteress who is both "errant" and "erring." But what does this transportation look like? Is the younger and sassier Jenny an Olive Oyl figure who is skinny enough to fit into a basket? That's Martin's choice (*SFQS*, note 25). Or mightn't the laughs derive from the exact opposite? Could Jenny be more like the chubby princess of Marie de France's "Lai des Deux Amants"? Either is funny. So too is the mangled moral of the story, which takes us all the way back to the biblical foundations of justice, whence my inclusion of *Basket Case* in *Trial by Farce*.

At his master's behest, Brother John, the Cleric, swaps out Jenny for a rock, with a repetitive *rondeau triolet* suggesting multiple attempts at said swap.[2] Next, the illicit couple goes off to do what they do (which, as in *Cooch E. Whippet*, might not be much [*FF*, 338–39]). And, eventually, dumb old Farmer John realizes that Jenny is no longer in the basket when, in lieu of conversation, he gets *stone-cold* silence. Meanwhile, the entire scheme plays out to the delight of an audience who, quite literally, gets to see what's going on *behind his back*. *Sic transit Jenny.* But does Long-John get his rocks off before he departs to offer feigned aid and comfort to the victim of his prank (as in *Cooch*, *FF*, sc. 5)? Regardless, he convinces Farmer John that, as divine retribution for Fielding's jealousy, the Lord has transformed Jenny into a stone. A compliant Fielding thus swears to trust his wife thereafter; and Jenny is returned to her husband. Talk about being between a rock and a hard place.

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Sets, Costumes, or Props

Your key prop, which Fielding must strap on, is a basket, which we've seen before in the *RC*. Recall that, in *Confessions of a Medieval Drama Queen* (*RC*, #46; *ID*, #4), Dolly relates how Virgil was left dangling in one, publicly humiliated by a woman who had rebuffed his advances (*ID*, 100–01). To my eye, *Basket Case* calls for a giant *huche à pain*, the special French basket designed for those long, slender baguettes. With a bit of searching on www.amazon.fr, you can even buy one online. Otherwise, costuming will be determined by the season for working hemp, which might be winter or spring (*SFQS*, note 3; *RFlorence*, 341n). Try bundling up Jenny in multiple woolen layers as Fielding struggles to get her into the basket. You'll need lots and lots of farm equipment too: hoes, scythes, rakes, trowels, and the like, plus some liquid comfort for Fielding.

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"Time of the Season." By Rod Argent. BMI Work #1516893.

"Fugue for Tinhorns." ["I've Got the Horse Right Here."] By Frank Loesser. https://www.mtishows.com/guys-and-dolls

"Once in a Lifetime." ["Letting the Days Go By."] By David Byrne, Brian Eno, Christopher Frantz, Jerry Harrison, and Martina Weymouth. BMI Work #1117241.

"Field of Opportunity." By Neil Young. ASCAP Work ID: 360219907.

"The Bonnie Banks o' Loch Lomond." ["You Take the High Road."] Traditional.

"It's Not for Me to Say." By Robert Allen and Al Stillman. ASCAP Work ID: 390157034.

"The Wind Beneath My Wings." By Larry J. Henley and Jeff Alan Silbar. ASCAP Work ID: 530268050 and BMI Work #1678281.

"Whatever Will Be Will Be." ["*Que Sera Sera*."] By Jay Livingston and Raymond Evans. ASCAP Work ID: 530045880.

"I've Come to Wive It Wealthily." By Cole Porter. ASCAP Work ID: 390073553.

"Light My Fire." By John Paul Densmore, Robert A. Krieger, Raymond D. Manzarek, and Jim Morrison [i.e., the Doors]. ASCAP Work ID: 420138596.

"Brother John." From *The Singing Nun*. By Randy Sparks. ASCAP Work ID: 320139579.

"Runaway." By Max Crook and Del Shannon. ASCAP Work ID: 312550193.

"The Bible Tells me So." By Dale Evans. ASCAP Work ID: 320044331.

"I'll Be There for You." By David Crane, Marta Kauffman, Michael Jay Skloff, Philip Solem, Danny Wilde, and Allee Willis. BMI Work #2033645.

"Truckin'." By Jerry Garcia and Robert Hunter. ASCAP Work ID: 500205665.

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"Carry that Weight." By John Lennon and Paul McCartney. BMI Work #187794.
"I'm Not Your Stepping Stone." By Tommy Boyce and Bobby Hart. BMI Work #662711.
"Solid [as a Rock]." By Nickolas Ashford and Valerie Simpson. ASCAP Work ID: 490546059.

[SCENE 1]

[The action unfolds over three loci: the home of Farmer John and Jenny, situated on the outskirts of town near a convent; the small village featuring a church; and the hilly road that joins home to village, and village to hemp fields. Lights up on the Fielding home, where Jenny, alone, experiments with the appearance of various maladies: sneezing, limping, coughing, etc.]

Enter **FARMER JOHN FIELDING,** *a jealous man, who says*: My wife, my helpmate, come! It's time to go! It's plowing season. You'll accomp'ny me into the hemp fields. We reap what we sow, and he who seeks the blessings of the season's fruitful harvest works to sow his seed. Early to rise, yes, lest all be for naught and, lest he waste his time for no good reason, I assure you, all his labors lost. Let's speed the plow, my Jenny-on-the-spot! Away with us, my beauty, let's go. Now![3]

JENNY, *pretending to be powerless to stand on her own two feet*: Alas, dear! I assure *you* I cannot, I swear: I can't possibly leave this house.

FARMER JOHN: Whyever not? What's happened, my dear spouse? Don't tell me that you've had an accident?

JENNY: Alas, God save you, sir—[*indicating the audience*]—they'll all know how I've come to have *another* accident. [You'll be defamed for it, you bet your life.]

FARMER JOHN: A series of unfortunate events, indeed. You must relate this incident forthwith: Where does it hurt? What's pained my wife?

JENNY: Well, if you really must know, fine. All right, it hurts me right here: in the feet and legs.

FARMER JOHN: [*Grabbing a bottle*] I've got your cure: some booze will set you right! A good stiff one to get you on your way.

[He serves himself first. Copiously. He next pours Jenny a huge glass of alcohol that she downs in one shot. Eventually, this prompts real—not feigned—trouble remaining erect.]

JENNY: That's way too much. And how very polite! Your great solicitude just leaves me dazed.

FARMER JOHN: [*Collecting his tools*] I'll get to the thrift store one of these days for new stockings and shoes: just not today. You'll be all warm and

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toasty once I do. I promise that I'll get to it someday, honest. For now, though, without hurrying you. . . . Hurry up! Hemp fields! Haven't got all day! Duty calls: there's not one minute to lose. Time of the season's© now. First work, then play! You, wife: obey without further ado! And, this, without objection, I might add.

Now, if I might just gather up my tools. . . . I've got the hoe right here©—my sickle too—and, Saint Mary, my beauty!—I must not forget my liquid comfort for the job. High spirits guaranteed by this, my flask. Shall we be on our way, then, dear, at last?

JENNY: In the name of Him in whom I believe with all my heart: I'm not going anywhere. I can't move an inch. Forward or backward.

FARMER JOHN: My dear, I hereby inform you that you shall indeed keep me company at work: willingly and without reservation. The sight of you will cheer me during my labors. [Now, get off my back. That's all there is to it.]

JENNY: Is that so? Well, how do I get there?©

FARMER JOHN: [*Pondering for a moment*] Aha! I have your answer! I've weighed the matter carefully and *voilà*! I've resolved the present conundrum. [Get *on* my back!] I'll simply put you in my basket and carry you. And *that* is how I propose to carry the whole thing off.

JENNY: [{*Aside*} It isn't the cough that carries you off: it's the coffin they carry you off in.]

Kooky idea if I ever heard one but, hey, have it your own way. Whatever.

[John fetches a large basket and tries several times, with great difficulty, to squeeze Jenny into it. The first attempts are unsuccessful.]

FARMER JOHN: Hop on! Give us a kiss then, my little kookie.

How's it going? You okay in there, sweetie?

JENNY: Might as well just carry me out feet first. Soon as folks get a load o' you, they're gonna laugh their asses off!

FARMER JOHN: Let 'em laugh themselves silly. Sticks and stones, dear.[4]

JENNY: [Fine,] but aren't you neglecting to give due consideration to something? If any harm should come to me, then you, sir, are over and done with. You'll be a regular laughingstock too. And it's all downhill from there.

[After much struggling, the mimed scene of transport ensues to some appropriate traveling music.[5] The pair might pass through the village or roam among jeering spectators. They then approach the hemp fields, where Brother Long-John might be returning from a bit of illicit business.]

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[SCENE 2]

BROTHER LONG-JOHN, *a mendicant Franciscan monk on the prowl, espies the laborer carrying his wife.* [*From a distance, he motions him over.*] It's brother John! Hey, check it out! The Lyft driver! The chauffeur-dude! Just watch as I come out ahead. I'll get him good, that jealous fool!

A basket? He won't let her out of his sight. Ever. What a tool! No trust. That's what *that's* all about!

[The Cleric looks confused.]

The field hand! Him! Lives out that way. Fielding! His wife is playing dead.

BROTHER JOHN, THE CLERIC: Who is it? John Fielding, you say?

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: Duh. Hell, yeah, Brother John-Boy! Say it with me now:

The Devil come here, today! Come here, take him away![6]

His wife's got a thing for me, you know, and lemme tell you, my brother: the minute hubby's out the door, in the field of opportunity, it's plowin' time again![©] It's what that woman was made for.

THE CLERIC: Is that the truth?

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: The whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me—. Soon as I holler, "Yo! Anybody home?," I am *in*! I'm all over that like nobody's business. Hop right on, [rock-hard,] and wham, bam, thank you ma'am! No need for a whole production. And it don't cost me a thing either. And nobody's the wiser. My own personal garden of earthly delights. [Talk about getting carried away! Rocks my world every time.]

THE CLERIC: Do you go there often?

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: Hardly.

THE CLERIC: Nuh-uh, do too!

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: I deny it.

THE CLERIC: Why?

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: Fear of retribution! [That marriage is on the rocks, for sure; but] do you think I wanna wind up in the pokey? And not in a good way.

THE CLERIC: Why? Have you been denied entry lately? Banished perhaps? Did you get caught? I think not.

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: No, but I am kinda scared this could be the straw that breaks the camel's back. Mine too, dammit, when I get the crap beat out of me!

Now, a little finesse, please! Where there's a will, there's a lay. We're just gonna have to beat our good Brother John to the punch, [Brother

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John,] and get him back with some good old-fashioned trickery.

So . . . I'm not exactly sure why we're still standing around here listening in like a bunch of voyeurs. We've got a farce to play! Let's move it! Gotta go—lickety-split!—and grab my little travelin' gal. And, then, it's into the fieldings with us.

[A little traveling music, Maestro, please! Let's get this show on the road!]

THE CLERIC: But how exactly—? I don't get it.

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: And happy new year to *moi*, my brother, because am I ever on the case! You'll take the high road and I'll take—what else?—the low road.© Gonna go head that shmuck off at the pass—I know a shortcut, see?—and I'll be putting old Fielding out to pasture in no time. You'll run along behind and catch up with me later. Now, exit, stage right!

THE CLERIC: But what do I do next?

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: What you *do* is you *don't* forget the one big thing.

THE CLERIC: In the name of Saint Hilarious, what?

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: A rock. Go get one and—this is crucial—it's got to be a great big one. You'll carry it with you when you tail him. Finesse, I said!

THE CLERIC: And then what?

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: [When a body meets a body comin' through the hemp,] I'll simply appear along the way—*comme c'est curieux, comme c'est bizarre, et quelle coincidence!*—and chat him up like a pro. Flattery'll get you everywhere, you know.

THE CLERIC: I still don't get it.

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: In the name of Saint Marcel Marceau! You're gonna snatch that dumbass's wife and—pay attention, boy!—it's like this: you'll swap out *his* load for the rock. And not one peep outta you or you can go get yourself tonsured someplace else. You'll carry her off and—get it now?—we kill two birds with one stone! She flies the coop and he gets had!

THE CLERIC: Oh, I get it now. You go distract him. I've got this covered.

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: And, if I don't manage to fool a fool like that, I'll have lost my touch. [We'll soon see who's takin' whom for a ride around here because] it just so happens I know a little somethin' about turnin' tricks—playin' 'em too—and I ain't been caught yet. [Dude. I am a rock star.] There's no way I get blown off for some flunkey who's all talk and no action!

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THE CLERIC: So, what are you waiting for? We've got a suit to press! In hot pur*suit*, get it? Pray, carry on, my brother. Best go now.

[Exit Brother Long-John to head Fielding off at the pass while the Cleric begins the hunt for a Jenny-sized rock. After several false starts, the Cleric decides to find a stone closer to his destination, ultimately placing him within earshot—and eyeshot—of the goings-on to come.]

[SCENE 3]

[On the road to the hemp fields, Farmer John struggles with his cargo as the Cleric trails along behind, waiting for an opportunity to execute the titular swap—possibly while Fielding is still in motion but, more likely, when the Farmer stops to chat with Brother Long-John. Much poking, prodding, and groping ensue at the time of the swap, including sign language for explaining the ruse to Jenny, whom Long-John nonetheless pretends not to notice.]

BROTHER LONG-JOHN [*catches up to Farmer John and reaches inside his purse*]**:** Oh, Lord, may wealth and pelf rain upon . . . thou! Two hundred bucks—plus love!—this is my prayer.

FARMER JOHN: Saint Luke, I thank—. Wait: *Pelf? Rain*? What's with thou?

BROTHER LONG-JOHN [*hastily putting his purse away*]**:** Neither a borrower nor—. Anyhow . . .

FARMER JOHN: I pray that God see fit to treat you square.

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: Oh, Lord, may wealth and pelf rain upon thou! Two hundred bucks—plus love!—this is my prayer.

Say, friend! With summer sunshine everywhere, tell me: How is the weather treating you?

[Jenny farts.]

FARMER JOHN: High winds do give a farmer quite the scare.

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: Say, friend! With summer sunshine everywhere, tell me: More tempests forecast anywhere?

FARMER JOHN: Don't rightly know. Besides, what could I do?

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: Say, friend! With summer sunshine everywhere, tell me: How is the weather treating you?

FARMER JOHN: All right, I guess—thank God *that* much is true—except, I tend to run a little short.

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: Hey, so I hear. What can I tell you, sport? This too shall pass. Be patient: that's the cure.

FARMER JOHN: There's no sense in complaining, that's for sure, 'cause, in the end, it's not for me to say.©

[With the substitution of the boulder for Jenny seemingly complete, Brother Long-John attempts to send Fielding on his way.]

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BROTHER LONG-JOHN: You're off to work, I gather, for the day? Into the fields with you, is it?, *mon frère*?

FARMER JOHN: Yes, brother.

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: Right. Have a good day. Take care!

[The Cleric hits a sudden snag in finalizing the swap.]

Job workin' out? How's soil-tilling goin'?

FARMER JOHN: Just fine, *Monsieur*.

[Jenny is now out of the basket. The Cleric, distracted by the full sight of her, almost forgets to put the rock in her place.]

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: Good deal! What do you know! But—Saint Pete and—[*gesturing furiously toward the Cleric*]—Saint Roch![7]—the time! Would you look at the time! Must go. Got things to do! Must make a lunchtime convent rendezvous.

[The Cleric understands the cue and, as quickly as possible, he places the rock in the basket. Exit the Cleric and Jenny.]

FARMER JOHN: I understand, my brother. Let's be good.

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: [*Giving him a shove*] Just look at the time! I've got things to do! And—listen, field hand!—that goes for you too! She is the wind beneath your ass.© [*Aside*] Mine too!

Just look at the time! I've got things to do! Must make that lunchtime convent rendezvous. I've really gotta blow. I'll say adieu. We'll catch up soon and see what we shall see.

FARMER JOHN: Adieu. The Lord bless you and keep you too until we die, when what will be will be.©

[Exit the men in opposite directions. Farmer John continues on into the fields, where the weight of his new load continues to cause such missteps as getting stuck in mud, etc. Brother Long-John heads out quickly to meet Jenny. Meanwhile, the young Cleric and Jenny are the first to arrive at the hemp fields, where they might or might not take advantage of their "privacy." When Long-John arrives, he shoos the Cleric away. The latter trails Farmer John for a time but eventually thinks better of it and returns to keep Long-John and Jenny in his sights instead. As Fielding disappears from view, the Cleric locates a good vantage point.]

[SCENE 4]

Pas de deux

[Two near contemporaneous activities unfold as if on the scenic equivalent of a split screen: lights up and down as needed. Long-John and Jenny are now reunited behind some especially tall hemp.]

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BROTHER LONG-JOHN:
I've come to wive it penally!©
So, come on, baby, light my fire!©

JENNY:
We'll kiss, we'll fuck! Down on your knees!

BROTHER LONG-JOHN:
I've come to wive it penilely!©
And get my rocks off! Joust with me!

JENNY:
No time to wallow in the mire.©

BROTHER LONG-JOHN:
I've come to wive it penally!©
So, come on, baby, light my fire!©

[SCENE 5]

[Lights down on Long-John and Jenny. Lights up on Farmer John, who now arrives at the hemp fields at a spot quite near the illicit couple. Exceptionally weary from toting the boulder, he stops to rest.[8]*]*

FARMER JOHN: I think I'd better rest—I'm getting tired—I'll just set down that basket-load of weight or else poor hunchback here's going to expire.

I think I'd better rest—I'm getting tired—I've got no time to wallow in the mire.© I'll find my spot, unload, and start my day.

I think I'd better rest—I'm getting tired—I'll just set down that basket-load of weight. . . .

[After extricating himself from the basket with much difficulty, he sees the rock for the first time and, Harpagon-like, launches into a search.]

No! Jenny! Where's my little basket case? Did you get lost? Don't leave me all alone! What's happened? Someone carry you away?

No! Jenny! Where's my little basket case? Did someone—? Where's my little runaway?© Or is it . . . You've been turned into a stone?

No! Jenny! Where's my little basket case? Did you get lost? Don't leave me all alone!

[Lights down on Farmer John; lights up on Long-John and Jenny, who may or may not have succeeded in finishing their business.]

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: My cue! Can't leave hub on his own. I'll check up on him anyway.

JENNY: [He thinks I've turned into a stone.] I'm melting in the sun, like snow!

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BROTHER LONG-JOHN: My cue! Can't leave him on his own. I'll help him reap what he has sown and ask what he's prepared to pay.

My cue! Can't leave him on his own. I'll check up on him anyway.

JENNY: End him! Go ahead, make my day! Our masterpiece is almost done.

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: I've got this endgame. Come what may, he'll wail. I've only just begun.

JENNY: So, move it! Scram! Go do it! Run! Vamoose! We haven't got all day!

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: Won't know what hit him, promise, hon: he'll love you, honor *and* obey!

[Brother Long-John beats his hasty retreat and rejoins Farmer John as Jenny joins the Cleric to observe the proceedings from a safe distance.]

[SCENE 6]

[BROTHER LONG-JOHN]: Hi neighbor! God give you good day, good health, and a long healthy life.

FARMER JOHN: It's awful, brother! Never in my life have I—. I swear, I'm going to go insane!

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: Jealous much? What's the source of all this strife?

FARMER JOHN: It's awful, brother! Never in my life have I—. I swear: I'm worried for my wife! I've lost her now for good. She's gone away.

It's awful, brother! Never in my life have I—. I swear, I'm going to go insane!

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: [*Aside*] We call that just deserts.

[*To Farmer John*] She's lost, you say? D'you place a bet and lose and, now, she's gone?

FARMER JOHN: In sure and certain—. Hopefully, we'll pray.

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: [*Aside*] We call that just deserts.

[*To Farmer John*] She's lost, you say? I've never heard—. This must be Judgment Day!

FARMER JOHN, *showing him the basket*: Right here! This is where everything went wrong.

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: [*Aside*] We call that just deserts.

[*To Farmer John*] She's lost, you say?

Oh where, oh where is Jenny? Where's she gone?

FARMER JOHN: From right here in this basket, man, catch on! I lost her! Jesus Christ! She was inside!

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: This basket? In Saint Mattie's name, come on!

FARMER JOHN: From right here in this basket, man, catch on! I swear

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to God! I'm merely carrying on with wife in tow when . . . nothing left inside!

From right here in this basket, man, catch on!—except this stone instead!—I'm horrified!

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: And that, my friend, is that: the telltale sign that, surely, you have gravely sinned today.

FARMER JOHN: Some joker's just takin' me for a ride.

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: And that, my friend, is that: the telltale sign that you have sinned like mad! Could it be . . . pride? in thought, deed, or intent? You're gonna pay!

And that, my friend, is that: the telltale sign that, surely, you have gravely sinned today.

FARMER JOHN: But, bless my soul, what sin? I just can't say . . . unless it's maybe . . . I'm the jealous type?

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: Such madness tends to lead a man astray.

FARMER JOHN: But, bless my soul, what sin? I just can't say. Obsessed about her cheating every day? Okay?

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: You're dreaming! And the afterlife?

FARMER JOHN: But, bless my soul, what sin? I just can't say. Unless it's maybe . . . I'm the jealous type?

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: Just take it from the top, please: I'll advise. Why carry her around in the first place?

FARMER JOHN: Per your request, here's a brief resumé:

Weak in the knees! She couldn't . . . ambulate: that's *walk*. That's what she told me anyway. Some sort of accident out of the blue.

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: But there's your trouble, friend, I'm telling you: you've damned your soul! Thou troubleth thine house for mistrusting—mistakenly—your spouse as if she were some kind of cheating whore when—no, she's not!—she's faithful and adorable and keeps her vows. She's on your side, which clearly moved the good Lord to decide, as punishment, to turn her into stone.

Sin leads astray at some point: it is known. Now, surely, friend, you can't be telling me you don't recall that dude and gal when she—oh, rock of ages—this is how it goes: I know, I know, the Bible tells me so:©

Remember how God told 'em both that time they had to leave the city on a dime? "Don't look behind you! Don't you turn around!," He goes: "No looking back! Get outta town!" But then, the broad, she does what's not allowed, breaks faith, and disses God in *His* playground! Not one more step 'cause He don't mess around! Oh, snap! Turns her to stone! He

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takes her down! Aha! It's coming back to me at last! Your evil, sullied story's come to pass because of sin, and—dude!—you're gonna pay! You've wallowed in it every single day. *On y soit que mal y pense!* Anyway . . .[9]

FARMER JOHN: But what's the fix?

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: Hear me now and obey! Get on your knees, man! Get ready to pray! Do everything I say and ask God's grace. Beg His forgiveness now and be contrite for all that crap you just pulled on your wife.

Do it! Beg pardon! Otherwise, He may decide your afterlife is DOA© and damn you for the long haul—pray to play!—unless you quit it with those jealous ways o' yours. And no besmirching folks' good names or no *tollis peccata*. Go on, pray, that He deign to reverse her present fate and put her back to her orig'nal state. Pray God and all the saints! Don't you know how? Be quick about it 'cause I'm off for now, back to the convent, where I too shall pray and—looky there!—'cause, if you pray away, then, in the flesh before us, safe and sound, all in due form—I'm not fooling around—restored to health, there she shall be: your wife!

[Exit Brother Long-John to rejoin Jenny, who has been observing all along. So too has the Cleric, who now rushes to be of service.]

[SCENE 7]

FARMER JOHN, *on his knees***:**

Oh, Holy Ghost, oh, Son, oh, Lord of light!
Oh, Holy Trinity, your acolyte
does humbly beg: forget Ye not my plight!
Oh, Lord, protect me from the Antichrist
who, Scriptures warn, is coming in the night!
Reverse your edict, Lord, set things to right.
Remit my wife! Return her—this I pray—
to her orig'nal state, to me from Thou,
to how she was when she got led astray.
Should You be pleased to see she comes my way,
I swear that there shall never be a day
that I won't love You truly, come what may.
I've failed You this year, Lord, that much I'll say.
Forgive me, I'll do better—Lord, for, yea,
though—. May *Your* word become her flesh right now!

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[SCENE 8]

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: [*Groping Jenny*] Talk about flesh! Is he freaked out! He's terrified he sinned: [about to hit rock bottom]!

JENNY: What's that? What?

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: Scared him to death, that's what! Get this: he falls down on his knees and, then—[outta left field,] right?—there he is: all prayin' God, devoted-like, that He return you right away, never to doubt your ass again.

JENNY: Nice job.

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: Hey, what's he gonna do [between a rock and a hard place]? Brother John will return you right away without dragging his feet. [Where the hell is he anyway?]

[Enter the Cleric in great haste.]

THE CLERIC: [*To the audience and/or Jenny.*] Right here! And now, off like a shot. In fact, beating it as we speak.

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: [Oh, John, poor John!] Oh, Brother John?[10] Go bring her back! I'll head out first and go distract him like I do. Now, make it snappy, kid. Keep up. And don't forget to get rid of that rock! He can't suspect a thing.

THE CLERIC: [*With great erotic enthusiasm*] Go on, then. I'm all over this. I've got it: "don't forget the stone."

[New mimed performances to music might depict Brother Long-John returning to the convent for God knows what; the Cleric experiencing new difficulties with the rock or rocks and/or Jenny; Farmer John hunting, flailing, weeping, etc.]

[SCENE 9]

[Brother Long-John rejoins his mark in the hemp field. He makes his best efforts to gesture simultaneously to Fielding, the Cleric, and Jenny.]

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: Yoo-hoo! Say, friend, how goes it on your own?
Have you been praying Jesus, by the way?

FARMER JOHN: I prayed, I brayed. She's maybe just on loan?

BROTHER LONG-JOHN [*distracted and increasingly that the Cleric has not yet returned*]**:** Yoo-hoo! Say, friend, how goes it on your own?
Do one more prayer in your best baritone!

FARMER JOHN: I asked for God's forgiveness like you said.

BROTHER LONG-JOHN: Yoo-hoo! Say, friend, how goes it on your own?
Have you been praying Jesus, by the way?

FARMER JOHN: I prayed, prayed, and reprayed, as I just said: as hard as possible. Gave it my all, but still: neither hide nor hair of our girl. There's been no news at all about my spouse. [I haven't seen her since we left the

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house:] heard nothing, seen not one visible sign. [She's gone without a trace, that wife of mine.] The end is always closer than you think. Where is she? I don't know! What's happening?

[Enter Jenny.]

JENNY, *upon her return***:** Well, hiya, folks! All hail the heav'nly King! I'm back, God bless! To all of you, long life!

FARMER JOHN: Blessed is she . . . You're back, dear, from the brink!

JENNY: Well, hiya, folks! All hail the heav'nly King! Because you promised God and everything, He reunites me now with you: for life.

Well, hiya, folks! All hail the heav'nly King! I'm back! God bless! To all of you, long life!

FARMER JOHN: God bless you, darling! Welcome back, my wife. [*He falls to his knees.*]

I humbly beg forgiveness, pretty please. I've wronged you gravely: that just wasn't right.

God bless you, darling! Welcome back, my wife. Endowed you are with massive goodness. Quite. God's gift to you He now bestows on me.

God bless you, darling! Welcome back, my wife. I humbly beg forgiveness, pretty please.[11]

JENNY: [*With a private grope of Brother Long-John*] Good words, good deeds: we'll live in peace, as everybody's seen today.

FARMER JOHN: And nevermore to disagree.

JENNY: Good words, good deeds: we'll live in peace.

FARMER JOHN: Because, if we should disagree, we easily get led astray.

JENNY: By our good *speech*, we live in peace, as everybody's *heard* today.

[Center stage, Brother Long-John urges financial contributions.]

BROTHER LONG-JOHN:

Be gen'rous, folks, heed what I say;
for, now, we bid you all adieu.
But I can't have you leave today—
be gen'rous, folks, heed what I say—
until you step up and donate!
It's in your interest—hey!—ours too!
Be gen'rous, folks, heed what I say;
for now, we bid you all adieu.

[Possible closing music.[12]*]*

The End

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NOTES

1. Nor is it easy to keep track of all these Johns, which is entirely appropriate in a comedy of mistaken identity. But I'll sometimes overdetermine for clarity. In *Monk-ey Business* (*FF*, #9), I dubbed another Frère Frappart "Brother Peter" (for his obsession with his peter); but, here, he's Brother Long-John: a Rabelaisian Frère-Jean type (*Gargantua*, chap. 27; *CFRW*, 65–69). For the Farmer, technically, Jehan des Prés would be John "Meadows," but the wordplay works better this way. As for the other Brother John, whom I script as "The Cleric" to avoid confusion: his name is uttered only once (v. 342), and at a moment when Long-John could conceivably be speaking about himself. The ambiguity dissipates four verses later (below, note 10); but that's late in the game to clarify which John is doing what to whom. That confusion, by the way, is helpful to the physical comedy.

2. Martin found the overall musicality of the play ill-suited to its need for fast action (*SFQS*, Préf.); for my own part, I find it helpful for making the most of the physical comedy.

3. For some opening music, try "There's a Smile on Your Face, Brother John."© Here, below, is the flavor of the opening *rondeau* (vv. 1–21; my emphasis). I've endeavored to capture some of the musicality with different meters: lots of pentameter for old-hat Fielding (and prose for the more *prosaic* marital moments), breathless octosyllables for the aroused Long-John and Jenny; and prose for Brothers Long-John and John when talking among themselves.

LE LABOUREUR

jaloux commence en disant:
Ma femme et ma menagière,
Il est le temps et la saison
Qu'on doit labourer chenevière.
Qui en veult avoir par raison
Grande planté et grant foison,
Cultiver le fault de bonne heure
Ou aultrement sans achoison
On perdroit temps, je vous aseure,
Pour ce allons-y sans demeure,
Je vous en prie, belle dame!

LA FEMME

faignant estre impotente et ne povoir soustenir sur ses piedz:
Las! mon amy, c'est chose seure
Qu'aler n'y pourrois, par mon âme.

4. An utterly delicious pun: *Laissez leur en faire le gal.* But according to Godefroy, *gal* is also a rock or stone in Norman dialect. Martin astutely reads Jenny's line as meaning that, if she can't walk, people will suspect domestic violence (*SFQS*, note 6).

5. For traveling music, you might try "Trucking."©

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6. *Et ouy, que le dyable l'emporte!* (v. 85). I've extended the line, now and later (vv. 224–25), for the intertextuality with *Cooch E. Whippet* (*FF*, 355; 359).

7. For the fabulous wordplay (v. 71) on Saint Peter (*Pierre*) and rock (*pierre*), I've found another solution.

8. For more traveling music, you might try the chorus from "Carry that Weight."©

9. I offer the brilliant Middle French of this speech in its entirety (vv. 273–98), which also sounds vaguely like the Orpheus myth. For Martin, Long-John corrupts the Bible story deliberately, such that he conveniently recasts Lot as a jealous fool who, like Fielding, is responsible for his wife's suffering (*SFQS*, note 129). Meanwhile, the play's mangled myth-making will be reechoed by Farmer John in what sounds like a riff on the apocryphal birth of France when King Clovis converted to Christianity in exchange for victory in battle (vv. 320–34).

FRERE FRAPPART

Velà dont vient tout le meschief
Et donc vous dampnez vostre âme,
Mescroyant vostre preude femme
D'estre paillarde adultaire,
Qui ne l'est pas, mais debonnaire
Et loyalle à sa partie.
Pour cela Dieu l'a convertie
Et reduyte en celle pierre.
Par peché tressouvent on erre
De quoy on a pugnition
En quelque temps sans fiction,
C'est une reigle bien commune.
En Bible avons histoire d'une
Et d'un quidem à qui Dieu dist
Que brief d'une cité sortist
Et que après luy ne regardast,
Mais sans sejourner s'en allast.
Le commandement Dieu trespassa
Mais plus avant el ne passa
Qu'en pierre Dieu la transmua
Et d'ainsi longtemps ne mua.
Maintenant m'en est souvenu.
Ce malheur cy est advenu
Pour vostre enorme peché
Dont avez esté entaché
En pensant mal où point n'y est.

10. As opposed to the previous *Il fauldra / Que frère Jehan si vous retourne* (v. 341), which could conceivably mean that he, *Long-John*, must return Jenny, we now hear that *Frère Jehan* is unambiguously the Cleric: *O* frère Jehan, *mon amy doulx*, / Appor-

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tez-la, *je voys devant. . . .* (vv. 346–47; my emphasis). Needless to say, the *la* of *apportez-la* could refer to either the rock or the woman.

11. After another clearly musical *rondeau*, the envoi (vv. 392–99) follows up with extensive wordplay on *don*, *pardon*, *concordon*, and *discordon* (vv. 382–90).

12. For obvious reasons, maybe: "I'm Not Your Stepping Stone,"© "There's a Smile on your Face, Brother John,"© "My Little Runaway,"© or "Solid [as a Rock]."©

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5.
Who's Your Daddy?
[Jenin, Filz de Rien]

CAST OF CHARACTERS

[MARY,] the MOTHER (La Mère)
and JOHNNY, her Son (Jenin)
FATHER JOHN OTIUM, the PRIEST (Le Prestre/Magister Campos)
and SIR HYSTRADAMUS, a SEER (Ung Devin/Maître Tignon)[1]

PRODUCTION NOTES

The highly philosophical *Farce nouvelle très bonne et fort joyeuse de Jenin, Filz de Rien, à quatre personnaiges* (*RBM*, #20) was published by Barnabé Chaussard in Lyon sometime between 1532 and 1550; but it probably dates from the late fifteenth century. Subsequent editions appear in *ATF*, 1: 351–71; *RF*, 3: 273–328; and in *SFQS* (with a terrific comparative analysis of *Messire Jehan* [*RLV*, #29] and the Pathelin): https://sottiesetfarces.wordpress.com/2020/12/29/jenin-filz-de-rien/. Relatively long for the *RBM* at 465 to 474 octosyllabic verses (depending on who's counting), it unfolds in mostly rhyming couplets and in a marked Norman dialect that would lend itself well to contemporary regional or ethnic accents. Our anonymous play was summarized by Petit de Julleville (*RTC*, 150–51) and by Faivre (*Répertoire*, 216–17); plus, Tissier translated it into modern French (*FFMA*, 1: 319–35). Object though Tissier did, by the way, to the overall lack of interest in *Jenin, Filz de Rien* (*RF*, 3: 277; 286), this fascinatingly precocious farce remains virtually untouched. That's a mistake.

If updated, *Jenin, Filz de Rien* would be about a DNA test, except with a major twist. It's the father—literally, the *Father*, "John Otium" (Magister Campos)—who is dying to claim paternity of the titular Jenin, whereas it's

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the unnamed Mother (whom I've ironically christened "Mary") who issues three full-throated Petrine denials of that paternity. The rhyme says it all: *père* (father) goes with *vitupère* (libel). Apparently, an admission to sexual relations with a priest is a prospect so embarrassing, so reputation-killing, and so *déclassé* that Mary prefers another explanation. Johnny's real father was—get this—an article of clothing. That's right: papa was a doublet (*pourpoint*) in possible collusion with a jerkin (*jacquette*) (§ "Sets, Costumes, or Props"). However, Mom's claim of an inanimate inseminator is so preposterous that even her peasant fool of a son (*villain/badin*) doubts its veracity. It is his doubts and her denials that set the plot in motion when Johnny decides to enlist the assistance of a Seer.

This is theater. The medium is the message and, in this farce, make way for an actual *medium*. He's the backwards diviner and great predictor of the past: the dervish-like "Master Hystradamus" (Maître Tignon). He is part sybil (as in the *Mistére du Viel Testament* [*ROMD*, 200–04]), part medicine man (as in *Playing Doctor* [*RC*, #28; *FF*, #6]), and part hawker of mystical, rub-a-dub-dub pregnancy potions (as in *Slick Brother Willy* [*RBM*, #18; *ID*, #11]). He is also part soothsayer (à la *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*) and part snake-oil salesman who, like his *compère* in *The Pardoners' Tales* (*RBM*, #26; *ID*, #10), might be brandishing an eel in lieu of the pharmacist's grass snake (*ID*, 261–63). (That would make him part "eel-charmer" too, I suppose: after all, Mary does call him a "fresh-water"—and "piss-water?"—Seer or *ung devin d'eaux doulce* [1: 368].)

Who, then, is Johnny's daddy? Was that doublet a real jerkin? Was a different jerk involved? Or is Johnny Junior, who sounds more and more like the Priest as the play proceeds, a real chip off the old blockhead? Think of the events as the quest by a troubled *enfant avec souci* for his mama's baby-daddy. Its vibe is akin to that of the old joke about the wide-mouthed frog pestering any species he can find with "What do you feed your babies?"[2] Either that or it's a game of Twenty Questions. But, where *Basket Case* (#4) gave us "mineral," *Who's Your Daddy?* asks us: "Animal or vegetable?" Eventually Johnny finds out that. . . . You'll see. But our story wraps with a stunning, forty-one-verse soliloquy in which our antihero ponders the very nature of his identity (Figure 1). As if springing directly from the pages of the roughly contemporaneous Humanist philosopher Nicolas of Cusa, this EveryJohn commingles opposites: he either is or he is not; he is *and* he is not; he neither is nor is not.[3] All that as the play winks throughout at its own illogic with the not-exactly-scholastic Johnny uttering a full twenty times the adverb of logical conclusion, *donc/doncques*. All as it careens toward one of farce's most bizarre *envois*

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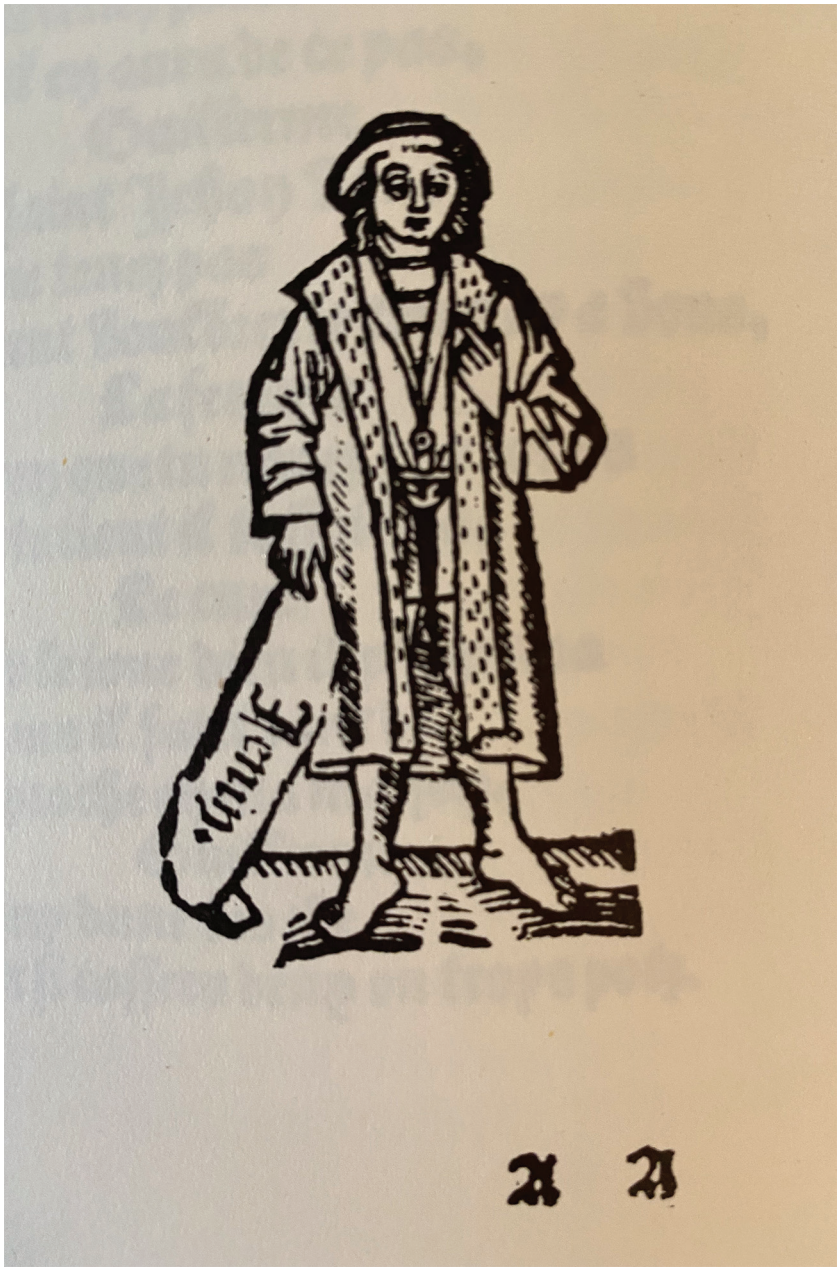

Figure 1. Title page, *Jenin, Filz de Rien. Recueil du British Museum,* #20.

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ever: a local in-joke and, perhaps, an anti-Lutheran barb that I won't spoil at this juncture (below, note 18). But leave it to *Who's Your Daddy?* to hit the road, Johnny, with the inconceivable.

Sets, Costumes, or Props

I recommend that the kooky baby-daddy candidates be visible on stage, ideally on the person of the Priest: namely, the *pourpoint* (the jacket or doublet) and the *jacquette* (the jerkin or vest). Normally, the longer *pourpoint*, quilted or padded, had long sleeves, and could be worn over the sleeveless, unpadded *jacquette*, often made of leather.[4] And what can I say? Too bad these are upper-body garment because I was dying to call Johnny a *sonofabreech*. But there is plenty of philological fun to be had: all the more so in light of Martin's reminder that the *fil* of textiles (thread) would have been pronounced identically to *filz* (son) (*SFQS*, note 28). As for Johnny's wardrobe, give him the *badin*'s fool's cap, clownish clothes, and a codpiece of Gargantuan proportions (just like Daddy's). For his own part, Father Otium carries his escritoire with him, a portable desk-like case containing ink, pens, quills, paper, and the like, which also served as a hard surface for writing.

As for the sibylline Seer, whom Tissier sees in a black cape and doctoral hood (*FFMA*, 1: 329), that's certainly one plausible look. But I would model him on Johnny Carson's Carnac the Magnificent, complete with stereotypical sultan's or swami's turban, crystal ball, and glowing orb, the better to mock today the cultural ignorance of a nonseeing Seer of yesteryear. Additionally, he requires a flute (for a pun with *flajoller*) and various bottles, jars, and beakers, all rather unclean (with Martin positing lice swimming around in one of them [*SFQS*, note 142]). They're for urine specimens, one of which must be produced "live" and, presumably off stage, as in *Blind Man's Buff* (*FF*, 180–82) or *Brother Fillerup* (*ID*, #6). This unholy water makes for one fine parody of baptism, suggests my colleague Valerie Allen. It likewise makes the most of the dual meaning of *orine* as both *urine* and *origin*, the former, argues Martin, employed to prove the latter (*SFQS*, note 108). Finally, for the caged animal (*malle beste*) that the Seer displays, Martin opts for a diabolical dog in a green outfit, as in *La Fille Bastelierre* (*RLV*, #1; *SFQS*, notes 88, 92, 126). Personally, I'd go with a snake in honor of the intertextuality with *The Pardoners' Tales* (*HD*, #10): from snake-oil salesman to snake charmer. How about a cobra and a mongoose?

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"Sometimes I Feel like a Motherless Child." Spiritual.
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[SCENE 1]

[After some opening music, the action takes place in three locations: the home of Johnny and his mother, ideally situated center stage; the nearby church in the public square; and Father John's manse between the two. Lights up on Mary at home as she attempts to collect her son for a trip to market. Oafish Johnny is engaged in a variety of distracting—preferably disgusting—activities. The scene unfolds peripatetically with the pair eventually finding themselves near the manse.[5]*]*

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[**MARY, THE MOTHER,** *speaking to the audience*]**:** Just look at him, folks, that's my boy. I'm thrilled, I swear. Blessed be the hour I made him! He's my pride and joy.

Just look at him, folks, that's my boy. And so polite. I'm overjoyed by him, I am. Makes me so proud.

Just look at him, folks, that's my boy. I'm thrilled, I swear. Blessed be the hour!

JOHNNY: Yo!

[**MARY:** Johnny?

JOHNNY: Yo!]

MARY: What is it now? Get lost, you moron! What a shmuck!

JOHNNY: Hey, you tell me, Ma, and—. Calm down! What do I get—how 'bout a buck or two—if I talk good next time?

MARY: What's coming to you. Such a putz!

JOHNNY: Oh yeah?

MARY: God help me, my last dime. Johnny?

JOHNNY: Yo! Yo! [*He raises a hand, as if to bless her, but decides to pick his nose instead.*]

MARY: No time for mime, my rose. That's all you have to say, dear? Leave it for another day.

JOHNNY: Huh? What am I supposed to say? [*He farts.*]

MARY: Whatever you like, sir, but let *me* say: something like "excuse me" would be a good start.

JOHNNY: Okeydokey, then. [*He farts again.*] *Excuse* me! I'm familiar with the phrase.

MARY: Johnny, Johnny!

JOHNNY: Yo! Yo!

Oops! Guess I forgot already. Okay, beggin' your flippin' pardon, Ma: How's tricks?

MARY: To hell with you, boy! You'll never know a damn thing your whole life. Now, learn some manners, you dumb hick! When are you going to get it through that thick head of yours that there's a right way and a wrong way of doing things? Now, get thee to school—any school!—and learn how to talk proper to folks.

JOHNNY: Yes'm, 'cept, one o' these days, I'm a-goin' over to Dad's place. You know: To Father John's? [John Senior's?] Been meanin' to get over there.

MARY: The hell you say, boy! Since when is *he* your father? Who told you that?

JOHNNY: Oh, for God's sake, Ma, what is this, Twenty Questions? Ain't like

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it's defamation o' character or nothin' and—hey!—you don't like the sound of it? Then just come right out and tell me once and for all. Who's my daddy?

MARY: I have no idea, I swear! I don't know him.

JOHNNY: Say what? Awesome assertion there, Ma. Like you don't know who my father is. Who else would know?

MARY: What am I, on trial here? Didn't I just tell you I don't know anything about it?

JOHNNY: Then who—oh, who—could Daddy be? I hope to God it *is* the priest!

MARY: You're a damn fool.

JOHNNY: Could be. But, for God's sake, it ain't like I ain't heard it before. Now, give it up! Who was it lay down beside you© when I got made? *In bed.* If there wouldn't've been nobody else there to—you know—*sire* me, then I'd be—whaddaya call it?—imperfect. [And I ain't talking no verb tense neither!] I would, therefore, heretofore, theretofore, whereverto-fore . . . be an anoma*mama*ly.

Now, out with it, Ma! How am I supposed to be only *your* son and yours alone?

MARY: I'll tell you how, Johnny. Once upon a time, I'd gone to lay down on the bed for a while—fully clothed, I might add, in my skirt and my pet-tipants too—and, this much I know: there was nobody around besides me, honest. Not a single living soul.

JOHNNY: How, then, therefore, was I conceived?

MARY: I don't know. I didn't notice. But, if it'll shut you up for five minutes: [I'll say it again. There was nobody there! *Nobodaddy* on top except a jerkin and a pourpoint.

{*Johnny looks perplexed.*} A vest and a doublet.

A jerkin and a pourpoint, I said! What do you want? A *PourPoint* presentation? Oh, for God's sake,] if you'll just give this thing a rest: all that was near me was a vest—a jerkin—and a doublet too.

JOHNNY: O' wondrous miracle! Who knew? What? I'm some poor *sonofa-vest*? I don't believe it. Can't be true.

O' wondrous miracle! Who knew? Except—I swear!—then, I'd be screwed for life, Ma: this is some fine mess . . . .

O' wondrous miracle! Who knew that I'm some poor *sonofavest*?[6]

MARY: Poppycock! I am not impressed. You don't believe me, honey-lamb?

JOHNNY: I just can't make out who I am. [Wait! Now, I'm Mama's honey-*lamb*?] I'm some *sonofasheep*?

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MARY: [As if I'd pull the wool over your eyes! You don't believe that you're my son?[7]] You're hurting my feelings, dear. Now, I'm telling you once and for all: you're my son. Case closed.

JOHNNY: Is not! Am not! Gimme a break, Ma. So, who's the procreator? *Somebody* must've concocted me. Maybe over a beer? [What? He croak or somethin'?] *Anyhoo*. . . . What were you doing and *who* were you doing when I got made? Whozit was on top?

MARY: A jerkin.

JOHNNY: And so, therefore, no need to make a federal case out of it. Verdict's in: Papa was a jerkin.[8]

MARY: Oh, come off it!

[*To the audience*] He most certainly was not! [Next thing you know, Papa was a rolling stone.©]

JOHNNY: Then, therefore . . . [Papa was *two* rolling stones!©] It must've been the pair of 'em together, by God! The doublet *and* the jerkin, I swear!

So, tell me, Mother dear, you've seen 'em both: Who do I take after? And you better tell me right now, on the *doublet*! Was Dad red and white? [He have a checkered past, or what?]

MARY: You're the son of neither one nor the other.

JOHNNY: [If it's not one thing, it's your mother!] Then, God only knows, I must be . . . therefore . . . the son of somebody else. *Something* else. Person, place, or thing? [Animal, vegetable, or mineral?]

On one hand, it's not the priest. That much I know because you said so.

On the other hand, when I asked you just now about the jerkin and the doublet, you denied categorically that it was the one *or* the other.

Excuse me! You think I'm stupid or something? We'll soon see about that!

It follows, therefore, that—. What kinda creature am I anyhow? You're gonna tell me right now, I swear, before this little game of yours loses you the only family you *don't* got left!

[*Indicating the audience*] Or go ahead! Point the finger at any one of them play-friends and *lay*-friends out there before you lose them too![9] Who you trying to protect anyhow?

Now, take it back or—wait!—if it wasn't the doublet . . . I know! It was the sleeves! *That's* what was knockin' around down there, shake, shake, shakin' your booty© while you were sleeping.

MARY: What you are, son, is a moron, I swear! The sleeves? It wasn't them, for God's sake! [And there's nothing up *my* sleeve. And there was no

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booty call either.] The only thing anywhere near me at the time was a pile of clothes.[10]

JOHNNY: What? And the clothes had a dick, I suppose?[11] Woulda taken some kinda—. And speaking of fatherly balls, what a piece of timing! [Here we are at the church.]

[SCENE 2]

[Father John pokes his head out of the church portals; Johnny repeatedly removes and redons his cap.]

[JOHNNY]: *Bona dies et salutationes*, Magister Otium!

THE PRIEST, FATHER JOHN: God be with you, sonny boy. But cover up, cover up! [Don, dooby-do, don . . .]

JOHNNY: *Don!*© Got it covered, Father, right here. Back on my noggin. [{*To the audience*} And, by the by, folks: *whodonit*?]

FATHER JOHN: What good manners you have, my son. Yes, a fine young man. You oughta be in service to a great lord or something. But, please, cover up!

JOHNNY: [{*To the audience*} Just what I was afraid of, folks: a cover-up!] Showin' the proper respect is all, like I been taught. [*He dons and redons his cap again.*] Thusly.

FATHER JOHN: You're a nice kid. [*Motioning him inside the church*] But, hey: What can I do you for anyway?

[Johnny jumps here and there, palpating the church walls suspiciously and excitedly eyeing Father John's escritoire, blotter, and pens.]

JOHNNY: Nice whatchamacallit you got there and—oh my God!—that thing is humongous! All those tools really fit inside?

FATHER JOHN: Hands off!

JOHNNY: Why? It got teeth or something? What's it gonna do, bite me?

FATHER JOHN: You're the *crème de la crème*, my boy. But are you some kind of fool, jumpin' around like that?

JOHNNY: Just checkin' she don't come a-tumblin' down.[12] A mighty fortress is this . . . joint o' yours! Good God, Father! That's some codpiece you got there too! Jumpin' Jehosaphuck! You trying to trip me with that thing? Fixin' to lay siege with a catapult like that? I'd be a goner for sure!

FATHER JOHN: You'd be dead, my sweet son.

JOHNNY: Jeez, I'd just climb under you, and you'd take the hit.

FATHER JOHN: Pray tell, my boy: What brings you to my neck of the woods? Out with it.

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JOHNNY: In all honesty, I don't rightly know, unless . . . . It's my fool of a mother told me I got no father, [Father]! So, poor John-Boy here has decided to set off on a quest to find me one.

[Say it with me now: Who's my daddy?]

FATHER JOHN: I don't know about the mother, but this much I can tell you: you're my son, my son, I swear! And I know that because, the day I made you . . . I sure as hell never felt pleasure like that ever since!

JOHNNY: And, therefore. . . . Well, I'll be a monkey's uncle! How's about a hug?

[*He dances around.*] For unto us a child is born! Unto us, a son is given.©[13]]

[*To the audience*] I found him! Here he is! The one who hatched me! Like Mama didn't know! Or maybe it's just that she didn't recognize him [with his clothes on]. But, hey! I'm no *sonofadoublet* no more! I'm all legal now! All on the up-and-up.

Hey, Pop! That desk-thingy o' yours is a real beaut. Can I have it? Pretty please? Give it here!

[*To the audience*] What? It's my father, I swear! Look! Right there! In the flesh!

FATHER JOHN: [It's called an escritoire, my son: a sort of traveling desk, if you will.] Take it. It's all yours, so you can learn how to write and everything.

JOHNNY: Jeez, Mama, Jeez! Not wantin' to tell me who's my daddy! *Mmhmm, mmhmm, mmhmm!*

MARY: In the name of Saint Johnson, get off my case! The good father there never hit me with so much as a single shot.

JOHNNY: Huh? He *hit* you?

MARY: Oh, for—! No, not like that.

[*To Father John*] Bastard! Lowlife! Shmuck! Comin' around here, defaming my character like I'm some slut-of-a-priest!

[*To Johnny*] He's gonna rue the day, is he ever, I swear to God! And you mark my words: if he knows what's good for him, he'll get lost before he's got a lawsuit on his hands! [I mean, seriously: what about child support?] How much milk did that shmuck ever buy his whole damn life to feed you with? Sayin' he's your father. *Mmhmm, mmhmm, mmhmm* yourself! I'd rather die than put up with that kind of libel! It's defamatory! It's *vitupera-papa-tive*! Now, not one more word out of you about it ever again!

FATHER JOHN: My dear lady, *Madame*, Mother Mary! I'd stake my life on it.

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He's my son, I swear. For God's sake, it wouldn't be very nice of me to say so if it wasn't true.

JOHNNY: It follows, therefore, *Father*, that: whither thou goest, so shall I. [I will follow you, follow you wherever you may go!©]

MARY: [*To Father John*] For God's sake, don't encourage him!

And you, Johnny: you'll do no such thing! It's a lie! He is not your father. No way.

JOHNNY: Then, tell me my father's name and I'll go find him right now.

FATHER JOHN: My son—my dear [son]—it's me, I swear! And don't you ever doubt it.

[Mary pinches Johnny hard; a game of push me, pull you ensues.]

JOHNNY: Yeah, well, my *mother* just pinched me on the arm and told me it's a lie. As if Mama coulda conceived me without noticing you was there, like it was just a dream or something. Just a dream . . . dream . . . ©

Seems to me—. Jeez: *somebody's* gotta be my daddy. I don't know what else to tell you, Ma, except I'm thinkin' he's right. It must be him.

MARY: Poppycock, Johnny! Don't you believe it for a minute. As if that would be some kind of honor! As if any association with him isn't bad enough! It wouldn't exactly be in your best interest, you know, to be running around saying that this character here is your father. Now: that he's been all over the place fathering around—*everybody's* godfather—that's another story. No argument from me on that score. But this, son, is no gentleman.[14]

JOHNNY: And you, Ma, are no lady.

[*To the audience*] Seriously. Does anybody think this is funny?

What's your game here anyways? Is this some joke to you? Now, out with it! Who is he? Who's the great *inseminator*? If you don't tell me who it was you saw that time, then—cross my heart and hope to die on the Cross!—I'll be goddamned if I don't just say it *is* this character right here!

FATHER JOHN: Attaboy! And it's the truth, I swear. She's just making excuses [again]. Don't you believe her, sonny boy. She's trying to pull a fast one. It was me! I'm the one who forged you.

JOHNNY: *Forged* me? You crack me up! What? You're a blacksmith now? If that's the best you can do, then go shoe yourself a horse! You can always make a buck or two on the side while you're at it if this preaching gig don't work out for you. I ain't gonna be your boy no more. Go find somebody else for the job.

FATHER JOHN: If you're planning to deny it, I can promise you this: there *will* be opposition, I swear, in a court of law. [That would be an *ecclesiastical* court.]

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MARY: And who should know better than me? Bless my soul, Johnny, it's not him!

JOHNNY: Okay, fine. So, I'll just go ask the Seer and we'll all see what he shall see! He can tell me whether I'm *her* son or the priest's, and, therefore. . . .

What do you say, Ma? You in? I can find out once and for all who it was lay down beside you.© *In bed.* While you were sleeping.

MARY: You think he laid a hand on me? Oh, no he didn't! Don't you believe it for a minute. He's not the one who made you, I swear.

But, sure thing. I'm more than happy to get to the bottom of this. Let that prick answer a few questions: like where he gets off sticking his big fat nose into *my* business!

[{*To the audience*} Seriously. This is the material they give me to work with?]

JOHNNY: Good God Almighty, Mama! Good deal. I'm in too.

FATHER JOHN: Likewise. I'm in three. So, hop to it, Johnny, off you go, fast as you can! Go get him! You're off to see the Seer.©

JOHNNY: He'll take care of business, all right, and see for himself. And *he'll* be the judge of this material! Therefore, I'm off to fetch him right away.

[Exit Johnny, with or without the escritoire. Lights dim slowly on Mary and Father John, the latter overjoyed to find himself alone with her. Over the course of the next scene, Mary grows impatient and returns home, accompanied by Father John.]

[SCENE 3]

[Lights up on the Seer, hawking his wares in the public square.]

THE SEER, [*brandishing a basket with a cobra or a grass snake inside***]:**

[What do we say to death folks? Not today!]
Be careful, folks! Stand back! Stand back, I say!
Whoa there, evil snake! Once bitten, twice die!
She's proud, the vicious creature. Get away!

Be careful, folks! Stand back! Stand back, I say!
She's heinous! Run away, folks! Run away
before she bites you dead! The hour is nigh.
Be careful, folks! Stand back! Stand back, I say!

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Whoa, there, evil snake! Once bitten, twice die!
Behold! See how she wants to jump outside?
Behold that slith'ry, slimy, snaky shape!
She's giving you—beware!—the evil eye!

What beady eyes she has! She's all agape—
and dangerous! Watch out! There's no escape—.
But, wait! I'll simply shove her back within!
[You knew damn well she was a snake before I brought her in.©]

But seriously, folks: wait up! I can see it's high time to tell you what brings me by today. It just so happens I've gone to quite a bit of trouble to present, for your consideration, a most remarkable drug! That's right, folks, I've kept you in suspense long enough: it's . . . it's . . . it's . . . .

It works for any number of maladies and, besides, I've still got to tell you folks all about what line of work I'm in. Let's just say that, if there happens to be some female out there in your midst—a Margot, a Jenny, a Penny—and she can't have children. . . . Have I ever got the thing for her! Ointments, aphrodisiacs, warming jellies: treatments so piping *ha-ha*-hot, there's no broad nowhere, sinner or saint, who—[take me in, tender woman!©]—won't find herself in the family way lickety-split, once I go rub-a-dub-dub on her backside like so with this very hot-oil treatment right here! So fine, so salubrious, [so *dulce*, so *utile*] that, before you know it, she'll be knocked up and bearing a son! Okay, so maybe a daughter. So what?

And that's not all, folks! When it comes to differential diagnosis, I don't like to boast but, assuming you're willing to pony up, I am, after all—with all due modesty—the master of urine, and that's no B.S.! Why, any number of you have borne witness to my wit and my science.

JOHNNY: Whoa, mama, and what do you know! I do believe that's the man I'm looking for!

Monsieur! Mama sent me to fetch you and make some inquiries.

[The Seer ignores him.]

Fast as I could, for God's sake, to find you and find out [once and for all] whose son I am.

THE SEER: My friend, this much I can guarantee: you, young man, are the son of none other than . . . your Father.

JOHNNY: Duh. I know *that's* true, Jeez. [*He scans the audience.*] What I don't know, *Monsieur*, is whether or not it's some priest. Or other. [*He turns his back to the audience to look the Seer in the eye.*]

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THE SEER: Honestly? Could well be. *Qui sera sera!* Whoever will be will be.© But, first, as you know—I can tell just by looking at you that you're a smart kid—paternity must be established—adjudged, as it were—from your urine, [lest your father die without legal heirs. Now, *escheat* front, would you?] [*He hands Johnny a particularly musty specimen jar for later use.*]

JOHNNY: No way! We've hung around here long enough already. Mama's gonna clobber me, for God's sake! Then again, she'll be over the moon, for sure, the minute she lays eyes on you.

[The two set out for Father John's manse and, eventually, for Johnny's home.]

[SCENE 4]

[Lights up on Mary, now back home. She and Father John engage in desired activities while Johnny and the Seer wend their way over.]

MARY: Johnny's been gone a long time. I wonder when he'll be back.

FATHER JOHN: Whatever will be will be.© We shall see what we shall see. If he'd ever get back, that is.

JOHNNY: Mama will be looking out for us. She must have gone back to the house.

MARY: Ha! Finally! It's about time you got back.

JOHNNY: But here he is, Ma. He came. [*He brandishes the empty specimen jar.*] All you gotta to do is get some spare change. Hurry! [And then, he'll tell us what he sees.]

MARY: Welcome, *Monsieur*, God give you peace and—boy!—am I glad to see you!

THE SEER: Came in a flash, Ma'am, if you please.

FATHER JOHN: [*Studying the specimen jar*] Welcome, *Monsieur*, God give you . . . *pees?*

THE SEER: Your case in hand, I now shall see what's what, without further ado.

MARY: Welcome, *Monsieur*, God give you . . . *pees*? And—boy!—am I glad to see you 'cause—what am I supposed to do with "Father" here? Check out that lunatic! Ha! Damn fool has gotten it into his head that—[*grabbing Johnny*]—this other damn fool right here is his son! And that's why we wanted you to take the case: so you could get to the truth of the matter.

[The Seer motions for payment.]

It would be Christian charity on your part.

[*Mary reaches into her bosom.*] We'll pay you for your services, of course.

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THE SEER: I do solemnly swear, he's the spittin' image! I've never seen such a striking resemblance. A chip off the old frock!

[{*To the audience*} What do you want? A severance package costs money.]

JOHNNY: And *I* do solemnly swear. Get a load o' Mama, there: shakin' like a leaf that he might be my father.

MARY: [*To the Seer*] It's got nothing to do with me, *Monsieur*, I could care less. And it just so happens that he's not his.

FATHER JOHN: Is too! Oh, for God's sake!

JOHNNY: She lies! [What? You think I was born yesterday?]

[**MARY:** Judas Priest! As if I wouldn't know!]

JOHNNY: As if *I* wouldn't know! That's a good one, I swear! And, therefore. . . . What else would I be? Some *sonofabitch*?

[*To the Seer*] *He's* the one you should believe!

FATHER JOHN: That's my boy!

JOHNNY: It's true, I swear! He gave me his writing-thingy and everything.

THE SEER: Here's the long and the short of it:

[*He goes into a brief trance.*] In order to determine whether or not he's his son or what have you. . . . You, boy, must take a piss in this jar and be quick about it. At once, I said!

JOHNNY: What for?

THE SEER: [What's the issue?] That's how a paternity case works. To find out whose son you are.

[**FATHER JOHN:** The better to pee you with, my dear.]

JOHNNY: Mama's gonna hold 'er steady, while I piss, won'tcha, Ma?

[*Mary registers disgust.*] In the name of Saint Francis of Assissy, oh, yes, she will! And, God willing, I'll turn out to be the son of my father, Father John.

MARY: Don't tell me you're—. What *is* this? You're gonna pee in front of all these people?

[**JOHNNY:** Who gives a shit?

MARY: What? Have you no shame?[15]]

JOHNNY: Sure thing, Ma. Got plenty, I swear. But I got some nice-lookin' junk under this here codpiece.

Say, Mister, do I fill up the whole jar?

[Presumably, Johnny delivers while hidden behind a curtain, a partition, or a piece of furniture. His mother assists him, but not very well.]

Jesus! My piss is really hot! What the hell, [Ma,] Hold it higher! Higher!

She made me piss my pants!

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MARY: Inasmuch as the parties have consented to—. Seriously? You wanted me to lift that thing?

JOHNNY: Well, yeah! Now I ruined my shirt!

THE SEER: That's all very well and good, but I shall now proceed, *en connaissance de cause*, with discovery and with the big reveal.

[*He examines the specimen.*] And the verdict is . . . .

Know what? I can't tell.

On one hand, the urine is crystal clear, from which I divine that—[*grabbing Mary*]—this is his mother.

On the other hand, as for the father . . . . I have no idea. [The crystal's gone dark.]

JOHNNY: At least it's not that jerk-off—I mean *jerkin*—my mom was talking about, right?

THE SEER: Don't be a jerkin! What is this? A farce?

Inasmuch as *clear* and convincing evidence has been *produced* in *support* of the divination of the identity of your father, I would say that, judging from your urine, which is, indeed, clear as glass, that he is . . . he is . . . he could be. . . .

[I see not through a glass darkly. *Sonofagun!*] He might well be your father, but, damned if I know!

Over there, for example, I see *one* sign; but, then—round and round and round she goes—*et sic et non, et sic et non, et sic et* Mom?—next thing you know, there's another sign that leads me to conclude the exact opposite. [*He goes into another trance.*]

JOHNNY: Please, *Monsignor*, all I ask is that you tell me that this man here is my father.

THE SEER: Will you shut up already? What is this?

JOHNNY: I'll do no such thing, sir, Jeez. You already said he's my father. Whaddaya gotta go and contradict yourself for now anyways?

THE SEER: *Que sais-je?* Hey, what do I know? Just lemme do my thing here or—good God Almighty!—I'll just say he's not.

FATHER JOHN: I'm begging you, Lord Hystradamus: just use your best judgment. Let your conscience be your guide.©

THE SEER: So, shut up for five minutes! Silence, please! [*He goes into yet another trance.*]

You keep breaking my concentration. [Can't you see I'm in a trance here?]

[*Reinspecting the urine at length.*] He's his son.

No, wait. No, he's not.

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Then again. . . .

Res ipsa loquitur.

Not.

Good God Almighty, it's still impossible to tell!

But, to speak to the facts with any degree of certainty, I do believe that he is . . . he is . . . a *sonofapriest*, and here's how you can tell:

He keeps following that priest around; but, when it comes to the mother, he wants nothing to do with her. He keeps leaving her behind.

And, so: for the aforementioned reasons, I conclude that, for all intents and purposes—*apparentally* and *de toute évidence*, *ipso facto*, *habeas corpus*, *pater familias*, *et cetera et cetera*, that, *omnibus evidentibus*, Johnny is [*no sonofabitch*!] No! He *is* the son of Father John. [A real *sonofajohn*!] And, thus—.

[{*To Father John*} You weren't kidding when you called him "my son!"]

Hear ye! hear ye! In the presence of whomever and this company: he is *not* his mother's son.[16]

MARY: The hell with you and your *omnibus*! [What is this? Congress?] It's none o' your damn business anyway. In the name of Saint John . . . [Saint Johnson . . . Saint John's son]: I demand a do-over!

[*To Johnny*] [Let's be-kin again.]

[*To the Seer*] You, sir, are a liar! You can't just disown what you already owned up to. Some seer you are. For God's sake, you can't throw the baby out with the bath water! Just wait'll I get my hands on—. Now take it back before I shut you up once and for all!

[{*She throws the specimen jar at him.*} No way that theory of yours holds water!]

THE SEER: Wait! Not so fast. It's possible I was mistaken.

On second sight, look at that face! There is indeed a certain natural resemblance with Johnny's. A *prima facie* case, as it were.

MARY: So? He's my son?

JOHNNY: [And so's your old man!] Good God Almighty, no way!

[**THE SEER:** Yes, way! {*Histrionically, he goes into another trance.*}

Or maybe just come back again tomorrow.]

JOHNNY: Come back tomorrow? I'm *carping* that *diem* right now! Know what? Can't say I much like you.

[*To Mary*] Not too crazy about you either, Ma.

[*To the Seer*] Now, Father John: him, I like. Jeez. *That's* my Daddy, so help me God. You can overact all you want.[17]

THE SEER: Silence! Can't you see I'm trying to see here! Order in the court!

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Okay, fine: I'll make my best guess.

Know what? I don't feel like interpreting your urine anymore: I'll just keep messing up. But, in order to make *peace* between you, [to establish justice and ensure domestic tranquility]:

He shall be . . . nobody's son! [The son of Noman!] That's how I see it and my reasoning is flawless, if I do say so myself.

On one hand, his mother has told me he's no *sonofapriest*.

On the other hand, he would never want to be some Johnny *sonofabitch*, a Momma's boy.

So, therefore, [nothing to it:] he has neither father nor mother. Never did. And here's the point:

[While she lay sleeping—*in bed*—] there was nothing on top of his mother except for a doublet. [And where the hell's the script supervisor anyway? I wasn't even in that scene.]

Be all that as it may, she—the mother—could hardly have conceived a child, had she not been . . . *touchée*!, which, verily, is how we come to know that he is neither *sonofadick* nor *sonofabitch*. Of neither man nor woman born.

[Ladies and gentlemen, I rest my case. He's John, he's John, he's Noman's son! Danced a jig and away did run.]

[Exit Mary, Father John, and the Seer, leaving Johnny all alone on stage.]

JOHNNY:

I'm John, I'm John, I'm no man's son,
and—bless my soul!—what's done is done.
No son of man, son of no one.
[A face like any other face:
I'm not part of the human race?
A John-Boy who's no EveryJohn?
Who am I then? Johnny No-One?]
I'll thus conclude as best I can
['cause this is what I understand:]
Johnny is not his mother's son;
but nor is he his father's son.
Ergo, I must be . . . not a son.
No mom, no dad: in truth, no one?
Johnny's not Johnny? No, he's not.
Who might I be, then? Johnno? *Not.*
I'm John, I'm John, I'm no man's son.

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I cannot find a way to un-
derstand if I am or I'm not.
I'm God? Am I the Virgin Mary?
[It all seems pretty arbitrary.]
Since they're in Heaven, surely not.
So, I'm a devil? Wait. Say what?
Not horny! No horns on my head. . . .
[Hey! I'm not even married yet!]
God only knows where I came from.
I'm not a brute beast. I'm not dumb. . . .
Just looking at me, you can see
I'm made like men. In summary:
I am that I am, and I'm not.
[What's this? I think: therefore, I'm not?]
Am I Saint Peter? Or Saint Thomas?
Tom's come and gone: that much I promise.
It's truly hard to figure out
the truth of what I'm all about.
I don't believe I'm *not* a saint.
Make way, the altar! Fetch the paint!
Make *wafer* me! Who shall I be?
No saint up there more heavenly
than—folks, who else?—Saint Nobody!
Nolo contendere: not me!
Sonofahorse? Of course, of course?©
Sonofabitch but not a horse?
I'd ask: What kind of foal am I,©
that I'm not nobler? Also, why
I'm not "living" but making do.
But, now, without further ado,
[conclude I must; and so, I do]:
Here are my parting words to you:
[Am I to be or not to be?
The play's the thing; what about me?
"The usual, Monsieur Descartes?"
"I think not." So, over and out!
I'm nothing's son. I'm nobody.
Until something is made of me.]
I'm John, I'm John, I'm Noman's son.

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For the right sum, I'm anyone's.
So, pony up! It's all determined.
For all you know, I might be German.[18]

[Possible closing music.[19]*]*
Here ends the farce of Jenin filz de rien.

NOTES

1. The name "Magister Campos" evokes a Latinate R and R, leave-taking, or even recess at school (see also *RF*, 3: 302n). Conveniently, *otium* (a near synonym of *campos*) sounds like *odium*. The Seer's moniker, "Tignon," heard only once (*ATF*, 1: 368), suggests effeminate curly locks: whence, my "Master Hystradamus." Martin also sees a connection with ringworm (*SFQS*, note 143).

2. A pun here on my part on the Basochial troupes known as the *enfants sans souci* (*TB*, 23–27; *FF*, 11). While Bouhaïk-Gironès has called their very existence into question (*Clercs*, 131–35), one certainly finds evidence of their presence in Metz, e.g., on 24 November 1494. According to several chronicles, three such individuals arriving from Sicily and calling themselves *enffans Sans soucis* were talented *farceurs* (*Chroniques de la Ville de Metz*, 603; *Chronique de Philippe de Vigneulles*, 3: 321). If you're unfamiliar with the joke about the wide-mouthed frog, there's a version here (accessed 11 August 2020): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ssLkpiQyvk

3. A good place to start, e.g., is Hopkins, *Concise Introduction*, 8–9; and Colie, *Paradoxia Epidemica*, 24–27.

4. Recall that Jacquette was the Mother-in-Law's name in *The Washtub* (#3). Indeed, Martin suspects that it's Johnny's mom's name too (*SFQS*, note 24).

5. For opening music, perhaps "Sometimes I Feel like a Motherless Child"?©

6. For a taste of the richness and repetitiveness of the Middle French, here is the key speech about Johnny's paternity (1: 354):

LA MÈRE
Afin que plus tu n'en caquette,
Entour moy, fors une jacquette
Estant sus moy et ung pourpoint.

JENIN
Tant vecy ung merveilleux point
Que je suis filz d'une jacquette.
Sur ma foy, je ne le croy point,
Tant vecy ung merveilleux point.
Vrayement, se seroit mal appoint
Que la chose fust ainsi faicte;
Tant vecy ung merveilleux point,
Que je suis filz d'une jacquette.

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7. Owing to the density of the upcoming poetic set piece, I've made room for this line earlier rather than later: *Ne croys-tu point que soyes mon filz?* (1: 355).

8. And—*quelle coincidence*!—during the investigation into paternity, *mon père* is an *orphaned* rhyme (1: 355). Whence my interpolation: I'm guessing *mère*, a frequent choice; but *père* also rhymes with *vitupère* (1: 359).

9. *Ou par don vous escondirez / Ung des bons amys que ayez point* (1: 356): this is as rife with meaning as it is difficult to translate. Tissier agreed (*RF*, 3: 301n).

10. *Car je ne trouvay en ce lieu / Dessus moy sinon la despouille* (1: 356). *La despouille* has multiple meanings, i.e., the clothes that Mary had shed or her dirty laundry; but *despouiller* also denotes plundering an inheritance for, booty, as it were.

11. As we've seen, e.g., in *Blue Confessions* (*ID*, #2), the word for *couille* (be it "dick" or "balls") is again elided in *ATF* as "*c . . . . . .*" (1: 356).

12. Martin's idea for stage action is a good one (*SFQS*, notes 47 and 48): Johnny is jumping up and down trying to reach the church ceiling to be sure that the building doesn't collapse on top of him.

13. Although Martin points out that *noel* is a victory cry (*SFQS*, note 56), since Johnny calls "*Noel, Noel*" (1: 358), I've fit in Handel's runs on "born" in "For Unto Us a Child Is Born":© i.e., sounds like *bore-whore-whore-whore-whore-whore-whore. . . .*

14. For *Mais trop bien qu'il en fust compère* (1: 360): my reading is at variance with those of Tissier (*RF*, 3: 309n) and Martin (*SFQS*, note 77): i.e., that Mary would be willing to accept him as the boy's godfather (*compère*).

15. I'm with Martin that the copyist inverted two lines of the *RBM* here (*SFQS*, notes 132, 133), one of which has been dropped from *ATF*, 1: 366.

16. In addition to *omnibus evidentibus*, there is an allusion to a legal formula that is also present in Villon: *Patrem insequitur proles:* kids take after their father (1: 368; *FFMA*, 1: 354n156).

17. For *Vous m'avez beau faire des mynes* (1: 369), Tissier thinks that Johnny's reproach is directed at his mother, who keeps motioning for him to shut up and behave. I also hear a wonderful reversal of the *carpe diem* topos with *attendez à demain*, as opposed to Ronsard's famous message of *n'attendez à demain*, the "gather ye rosebuds" ending of "Quand vous serez bien vieille." See, e.g., https://www.poetica.fr/poeme-90/pierre-ronsard-quand-vous-serez-bien-vieille/ (accessed 18 March 2021).

18. While we've seen allusions to being painted and placed on an altar in *Pots and Scams* (*HD*, 115), this is a truly extraordinary speech (*ATF*, 1: 369–71). In lieu of reproducing it here in its entirety, I refer you instead to *SFQS*, starting at v. 428 (https://sottiesetfarces.wordpress.com/2020/12/29/jenin-filz-de-rien/). And, that's right: concerning the closing *Plusieurs sont à moy ressemblant; / Je suis comment les Allemans*, nobody knows what it means. Tissier thinks it might have something to do with all the Germans serving in France or selling themselves to the highest bidder (*RF*, 1: 328n); but, to my ear, it could just as well be evocative of the bilingual theatrical life in such cities as Metz (*MES*, 345–49). There could also be a connection with German mercenaries (*SFQSS*, note 166), or it could be an in-joke lost forever. So, why not try some-

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thing that worked very well during a read-through, when my colleague, Wolf Kittler, played the part? Have Father John speak with a German accent.

19. Obviously, something like "Be My Baby"© would do the trick or, again, "Sometimes I Feel like a Motherless Child."© But, since the story has finally been told, one could craft an entire production number à la *Wizard of Oz*: "It really was no miracle, it happened just like this. . . ."© Or how about a version of the song that closes out Monty Python's "Eric, the Half-a-Bee" who must, "*ipso facto*, half *not* be"? A version appears here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2maz36_q6Fk (accessed 13 November 2020).

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6.

Interlude

Beauballs, a Charivari [L'Esbatement de Coillebaut]

CAST OF CHARACTERS

RIDER, the Rider on the Ass (Celuy qui chevauche)
JEANETTE (Jehanete)
FOXY RENARD (Renart)
[Some Nightclubbers, etc.]

PRODUCTION NOTES

Since the legalistic farces go on at some length, how about a quick, seventy-six-verse romp (*esbatement*) of an anonymous *charivari* like this one? It's *An Interlude of the kind that we call, in slang, a "charivari," about an old man who is marrying a young woman or girl; which man, in the verses that follow, shall be named Beauballs* (*Ung esbatement vulgaulment nommé chalivary, d'omme viel qui se marie en femme ou fille jenne; icy lequel homme sera nommé en la rime Coillebaut*). The *Esbatement* is preserved as the penultimate text of the massive Ms. 25 of the Library of Berne (fols. 546v–547), a tome of 570 folios that houses a treasure trove of 101 works. *Beauballs* joins therein various administrative, legal, political, and religious documents (some, concerning Joan of Arc), as well as proverbs, a romance in Latin, ballads by such towering figures as Christine de Pisan and Eustache Deschamps, a bestiary, a morality play about the Council of Basel (the final text), and the ever-so-charming *rondeau*, "Your black ass(hole) is covered in green"—or is that "covered in dick"? (*"Vostre noir cul de vert couvert"*).[1] Unfortunately, the two editions of *Beauballs* are relatively hard to come by in the US, but they can be found in Appendix 2 of Rousse's *TFFMA* (1: 547–51) and in Michel Bideaux's *Martin en sa gloire* (377–80).

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Welcome to the processional folly of a choreographed shivaree that rivals any *Roman de Fauvel* (Dillon, *Medieval Music*). In entirely regular rhymed octosyllabic couplets, enter three surreal, gender-bending personages: note that the titular *qui se marie* en *femme* could signify both "*to* a woman" and "*as* a woman." So, which is it? Either? Both? Neither? Casting and costuming will decide, but they're all gossiping. "Beauballs," you see, is about to commit bigamy. *No*, not *that* kind of bigamy. Both Bideaux (377) and Sara McDougall ("Bigamy," 431) reassure us that *bigame* customarily denoted a widower who marries for a second time. Beauballs is thus doubly deserving of the shivaree's walk of shame (Bideaux, 377), here, at the hands of Jeannette and the "foxy" Renard. Make that the *ride* of shame or *asouade*, in which the star of the parade was an "ass" with its rider mounted backward (Bideaux, 380–90). As Jeannette explains to another apparent "Rider on the Ass" ("Rider"), she is ready to ride *Beauballs*'s ass. For one thing, the upcoming nuptials won't amount to much because, like Cindy-Lou's disgusting, poor-performing spouse in *Husband Swap* (*RLV*, #60; *HD*, 331), he's little more than a dripping, oozing pile of slime (below, pp. 127–128). For another thing, her indictment packs quite the legal punch in little space, touching on juridical issues of remarriage, damages (*les fraiz et la despense*), the polyvalent *gage* (wages; seizure of assets for a debt), child support, and the scaffold (*gibet*). And the *coup de grace*? A hysterical pun on the *droit de cuissage*: to wit, the legendary right of the *seigneur* to get first conjugal dibs on his subjects' brides. But that's what it was—a legend—and, believable though it was for centuries, it was elegantly debunked by Alain Boureau in *The Lord's First Night*. That won't stop the fun (*esbatement*), however, at Beauballs's expense. He's about to experience the *droit de coillage*. Watch those beauballs, Coillebaut!

Sets, Costumes, or Props

It's not so much the metaphor of the old "ball and chain" as it is the equine register of bridles, lassos, and halters. You'll need a horse too, or, at least, an ass; and, if you're wondering how in the world to get one on stage, you're not alone. Imagine *War Horse* or *Equus*, if you like; but I'd go with a joke in *Victor/Victoria* and stick two waiters in a donkey costume. That's why it might be fitting to set the events at the famous Crazy Horse Nightclub in Paris.

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"Hey, You." By Roger Waters. BMI Work #563900.

"Thank Heaven for Little Girls." By Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe. ASCAP Work ID: 500030817.

"Joint Is Jumpin'." By Fats Waller, J. C. Johnson, and Andy Razaf. BMI Work #40018486.

"The K-I-S-S-I-N-G Song." Nursery rhyme.

"Fugue for Tinhorns." ["I've Got the Horse Right Here."] By Frank Loesser. https://www.mtishows.com/guys-and-dolls

"The Madison Time." By Ray Bryant and Edwin L. Morrison. BMI #941544.

A man riding an ass shall speak to the girls and say:

RIDER: Hey you!© Over there! All you French girlie-girls wanna pleasure the boys and show 'em a good time and really turn in a performance! Get ready to cry those pretty little eyes out because our good buddy is gettin' hitched, which takes some kinda . . . *Beauballs*! That's who I'm talkin' about.

JEANETTE, *who shall be a very pretty young girl*: Say what? Is this true? You swear? Beau-*balls* of Saint Mary! He's becoming a bigamist? Well, tell, tell, tell sir! This chick he picked: Who is she anyways?

The one on the ass, **RIDER:** Prettiest little virgin you never did see! Young, perky, classy-like, and from a good family.

JEANETTE: [Thank heaven for little—©. In the name of coal miners, kettle-makers, ditchdiggers, blind men, and victims of cholera and the plague!] Holy Shmo, Saint Moritz, and Maurice *Chevalier*![2] Not exactly a genius move there on his part. Who does he think he's foolin'? And what's he tryin' to pull anyhow? He's old and feeble and droopy and gooey. He's slimy and runny and drippy and drooly. He's icky and prickly, impolite and just not nice. And all he ever does is cough and bark and yelp.

But, hey, fine by me! He can go pop those sticky buns in the oven, for all I care. [We'll soon see whose sorry ass is gonna rise to the occasion, 'cause] he sure as hell ain't pleasurin' no wife! No way, no how. Not with that limp old wrinkle-dick!

Think he's gonna tickle her fancy with that dead piece o' pecker-wood? Went soft [ages ago,] believe you me, and—[*gesturing*]—ain't gonna be no motion from *that* meat, [if you catch my drift]. Anybody

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tries to get that thing up and running, it just kinda sags in the middle and conks out. And there's sure [as hell] no stickin' it in!

Use it or lose it, I say, Beau*ball*, 'cause that meat-stick o' yours is totally outta commish. Dead as a doornail! [Take it from me, folks: that joint ain't jumpin'.©]

RIDER: Say what? Say who? But he seems so on the ball! Like he throws a mean party and shit. Like he's always ready to lasso 'em in at the old rodeo. Like he'd do three women at a time if he felt like it. Whoever, whatever, every which way but loose and—Jeez—still have plenty o' joy juice left over to keep right on workin' all them miracles! Makin' his case all over 'em—you know?—like he's some kinda rock star. *In bed.* And that dick of his—ten hut!—always up for the job.

JEANETTE: And, moving right along. . . . Can't prove it by me! I know what I know about his [so-called] virility and I'll swear by our own Dennis the Menace, patron saint of France: [you couldn't get a salute outta him if you tried]. Ain't nothin' gets a rise no more outta that asshole.

[Enter Foxy.]

FOXY: They oughta gouge his eyes out! [Puttin' on airs,] dickin' around, givin' everybody the business. Dude used to raise holy hell about folks gettin' married . . . [or married again . . . or remarried . . . It's confusing, I'll grant you. And don'tcha think you shoulda told these folks that *that's* what bigamy means? It's not two wives at the same time. It's one after the other . . . after the other . . . after the other. At the same time,] lemme tell ya: he couldn't wait to knock 'em, folks gettin' hitched, that is. Fit to be tied, he was. "Give 'em [liberty or give 'em death!,"] he'd say: "Hang 'em high! The spectacle of the scaffold for 'em!," and other accusations of that nature. And, then, for a wedding present, he'd bring 'em, like, a rope—a noose!—and happy *noose* year to you too, folks, because, now. . . .

[What? He goes and strings *himself* up by the—. Oops! Oh, *Beauballs*!] Holy Matheolus, [Flatman!] Ain't he studied no misogynistic lit? Clearly, not hard enough, seein' as he's gone off and gotten himself hitched again. I can't make heads or tails of it.

RIDER: [Heads, we win; tails, he loses!] And, hey! What's Babs Shortstuff supposed to do now? Now that he's knocked her up again?

JEANETTE: Who's that now?

FOXY: [Beau and Julie sittin' in a tree, K-I-S-S-I-N—.©] *Gee*, ain'tcha heard? It's *Badballs* and young Jules forever from here on in and—hey!—the kid'll be better off for it too, for sure, and a helluva lot better fed.

[*Suddenly lawyerly*] It does take two, you know, to fill 'er up and get

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those buns in the oven. And it's only fitting, therefore, that each party assume one half of the financial responsibility.

A fifty/fifty split, understand? For child support and shit. [Joint custody! *Get it? Joint* custody?] Anyhoo . . .[3]

JEANETTE: Gimme a break. She's just doin' it to [see if she can't get a rise out of him and] make old Beauballs sweat: you know, for gettin' married. [And, *he's* just doing it outta spite: to get folks' noses outta joint.] She ain't even knocked up! Or, if she is, it ain't by *him*. For all we know, it's Jules who's the baby-daddy.

RIDER: If you'd be so kind, then, as to—. What do you say we head over to Beauballs's right now and tell him off? We can't miss this chance to show him what's what if it's the last thing we do!

FOXY, *holding a halter*: To the altar, is it? Oh, yeah? See this *halter*? Let's see how he rides this one out because is he ever gonna pay! Getting hitched, my ass! Enough dicking around because I got the *whorse* right here!©

We've got him by the Beauballs now, all right, and—[talk about your beauballs! *Quelles couilles*! Ever heard o' the Lord's First Night? No? Don't you people know *anything*?] I refer to the *droit de cuissage*. [From the Latin *jus primae noctis*.] And lemme tell you, folks, we're the ones got the *juice* 'cause it's Shivaree Time!©

JEANETTE *or somebody else*: Serves him right! Let's head straight over to his house and make our own booty call right now! Hey, folks! Time for a little search and seizure! We'll turn the place upside down, grab the cash, and search the whole joint for the rest of his junk, which'll serve him right. And, then, we'll hit the bars. That's the plan, folks, 'cause that's how it's done.

FOXY: So, what are we all doin' still standin' around here talkin'? Waiting for a sermon or something?

EVERYBODY ELSE: Let's do it! We're off to see that bad boy because, it's Shivaree Time!© And, away we go!

[Closing production number][4]

[A song here with which to end.]

Chanson icy et sic finis

NOTES

1. The Table of Contents of this remarkable manuscript can be viewed here, as accessed on 30 December 2021: https://jonas.irht.cnrs.fr/consulter/manuscrit/detail_manuscrit.php?projet=8068. See also *TFFMA*, 1: 548.

2. She swears by Saint Moritz (*saint Mor*), who also came up in *Highway Robbery*

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(*ID*, 362n; 364n) and *Confessions of a Medieval Drama Queen* (*ID*, 367n). See also *DSI*, 740–45; 1090. Saint-Maur-des-Fossés, east of Paris, was a pilgrimage site (*RF*, 654n).

3. *C'est Coillebaut avec Jennesse* (*TFFMA*, 550) vs. *C'est Villebaut, avec Jeunesse* (Bideaux, 379): this sounds like an allegorical spin on Youth (*Jeunesse*); but Jennesse is also a given name deriving from "youth," like "Jules" or "Julie," both being helpfully gender nonbinary. And yet, feminine though Jennesse sounds from its ending, it's not clear that even farce would posit the existence of two mommies.

4. I recommend, along the lines of "The Madison Time,"© "It's Shivaree Time," or, for a different sensibility, "Shake Your Booty."©

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7.
Poor Bastards
[Les Batars de Caulx]

CAST OF CHARACTERS[1]

[DOLORES,] the MOTHER (La Mère)
HENRY, the ELDEST (L'Ainé qui est Henry)
LITTLE COLIN, the YOUNGEST (Le Petit Colin)
[NORMAN,] the STUDENT (L'Escollier)
and [DAISY,] the DAUGHTER (La Fille)

PRODUCTION NOTES

The *Farce nouvelle et fort joyeuse à cinq personnages, c'est à sçavoir les Batars de Caulx* (*RLV*, #48; fols. 269r–273r) appears in two editions only and, to my knowledge, has never been translated. It is the seventh play in *RFMSJ*, vol. 3 (again, not paginated continuously and with no verse numbers); and it was reedited in 1981 by Stefania Spada with excellent notes and commentary (347–62), albeit with an unwarranted snub of Lintilhac's brief discussion of our play in *La Comédie* (215; Spada, 348). Summarized by Petit de Julleville in *RTC* (113–14) and by Faivre in *Répertoire* (69–70), *Poor Bastards* proceeds in mostly rhyming octosyllabic couplets, with several *rondeaux triolets* interspersed over its 280 (or 283) verses, depending on who's counting. While the play is anonymous, its sexual vocabulary is similar enough to that of *Husband Swap* (*RLV*, #60; *HD*, #10) that, in his edition of the latter, Martin suggests a common author.[2] But a *farce joyeuse*?

Poor Bastards is unsparing in its tragicomic takedown of the inequities of succession, incarnated here by a piece of Norman customary law by which the oldest son inherits everything. Whence the moniker for any other siblings and for the youngest male in particular: they were called "bastards of Caulx" (a region in Normandy known for its chalk quarries [*chaulx*]).[3] Spada,

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in fact, goes so far as to make two intriguing claims. First, she asserts that the *coustumyer* invoked by the unnamed Mother (3: 7)—here, the pained "Dolores"—is likely the *Grand Coutumier de Normandie*. It was to be replaced in 1576 but it would have been in full force at the time of the play's composition between the mid-1400s to 1530 (354–55). Second, with few specifics, Spada hypothesizes that the plot is based on actual events that were all too prevalent (349; 356; 387). In any event, "poor bastards" says it all. In the eyes of the law, any sibling other than the eldest might just as well have been born a "bastard" (Spada, 350). And so it goes for the three "poor bastards" whom we shall meet in succession, as it were, after the death of their father. Language is all they have left—with a thick Northern accent to boot—and plenty of orphaned rhymes for these relative orphans. Indeed, their situation is so manifestly unjust that Barbara Bowen and, to a lesser extent, Spada, question whether we're dealing with a farce at all (*Caractéristiques*, 10; Spada, 351–52).

The first to return home for the reading of the will is an unnamed brother and a *commedia dell'arte* type: a student in Paris (Spada, 357). While there is some confusion in the original, we may assume that he is the second son and, perhaps, a current or future Basochien (below, note 1). He shall be "Norman" to emphasize the Normandy connection (Rouen being the capital of that region and the *RLV* being localized there ["ABT," § "Editions"]). Next on the scene is daughter "Daisy" (in honor of *Downton Abbey*), who seems shy initially but who is anything but. She is in service in Rouen, a mere 1.6 kilometers from Caulx and an important theatrical site as the home of the famous troupe, the Conards. And the last to put in an appearance from the closest by is "little" Colin, the hotheaded youngest (*le petit*), who might be imagined ironically as gigantic. A fascinating character in his own right, he speaks the language of violence, the very phenomenon that jurisprudence and its legal rhetoric were meant to mediate (*MTOC*, 160–170). Do have some fun figuring out what baby brother does all day. I'd go with drinking and gambling.

Now, enter the vulgar, *nouveau-riche*, *parvenu* "idiot of the family" (3: 8) and tormentor of his mother. It's Henry, the eldest, and *quel connard*! "What a shmuck!" Or is that *quel Conard de Rouen*? According to egghead Norman, Henry is practically illiterate (*vous ne scavés ny a ne boy* [3: 13]), which renders all the more pathetic big brother's mangled "kitchen Latin" or *latin de cuisine* (3: 13). To add insult to injury, Henry—a domineering "little Ubu" (*Répertoire*, 70)—purports to know his late father's will by heart. Now responsible for looking after his siblings (*gouverner*, *pourvoir*, *endoctriner*), he has other plans: namely, to sentence Daisy to the kitchen and to stiff his brothers with plenty of nothing. Nothing except off-color jokes, that is—riddles, to be exact

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(note 7)—as opposed to the Twenty Questions of *Who's Your Daddy?* (#5). Poor bastards! In the end, their only recourse is a lawsuit. Good luck with that.

Sets, Costumes, or Props

Consistent with such testamentary poetry as Francois Villon's *Testament* or the lesser-known *Inventaire des biens* by Pierre de Hauteville (1376–1448), Henry announces several inventories of what he's willing to provide. In this instance, they function as a *de facto* props list: a veritable smorgasbord of walnuts, peas, onions, eggs, chickens, pies, and toast, along with colanders, casseroles, pitchers, a mortar and pestle, and knives (the more phallic, the better). Given the Norman setting, I cannot help but hear an overarching pun on the *trou Normand* or Norman hole: that canonical palate-clearing moment for sorbet. In *Poor Bastards*, sometimes a hole is just a *hole* lot of nothing. And don't forget the quill pen (*un oueson* [3: 12]), a starring prop in the neighboring *Le Filz et l'Examinateur* (*RLV*, #58), projected for my next volume. Multiple articles of clothing are also enumerated: aprons, nightgowns, robes, hoods, belts, capes, and hats of every shape and size, including nightcaps, fedoras, Monty-Pythonesque silly hats, and fools' gear like the *cornete* (3: 11), the subject of its own farce (*TFR*, 438–45). Most important: an *armoire*, which could denote a free-standing wardrobe (a chifforobe) as well as a cashbox. I recommend both: place a strongbox in the cupboard. As for the siblings, their costumes and props correspond to their professions (or lack thereof): Norman needs an enormous book, pens, and paper; Daisy, feather dusters and a maid's uniform; and the idle Colin, dice and cards?

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"Hush, Little Baby." ["Mockingbird" lullaby.] Traditional.
"I Fought the Law." By Sonny Curtis. BMI Work #622695.

[SCENE 1]

[Lights up on the domestic interior of the family of five. Henry, the eldest, is studying the will; a mimed flashback might depict how he came to be in possession of it. Was he present when it was dictated? He places it under lock and key inside a strongbox, which he then hides in the armoire. Exit Henry.]

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Enter the Mother.

[DOLORES,] **THE MOTHER:** I'm angry, Lord, you've laid me low. My husband's dead—me too now—so, I ask you: Why wrest him from me? I'd hoped for his recovery but death has dealt the final blow.

Oh why, oh why wrest him from me and leave me with three kids in tow?—not counting my oldest, Henry.

I'd hoped for his recovery but death has dealt the final blow.

Enter **HENRY** *singing*: "Ten hut! What do you know! King's soldiers come to town to do another show and fire a couple rounds," I swear, like last year!

Yo! Hey, Ma. What's got you down? You look a little low. Hey, whatcha cryin' for?[4]

DOLORES: It's awful, son, just awful. It's your father. I'm a widow and you're an orphan.

It's awful, I tell you, and your [baby] brother Colin will be just devastated. I only hope. . . . As long as he doesn't lose his temper again.

HENRY: I'll just say a psalm or something for him, provided I can remember one. Three whole times![5]

DOLORES: Henry, my son, the responsibility for their upbringing now falls to you. As the eldest, it's for you to raise, educate, and provide for the others. You're one of the Elders of Caulx now; [and they're your dependents].

HENRY: My kid brother likes leeks. We'll make him some for dinner.

DOLORES: It's awful, son, just awful. No one has seen him yet today but, as soon as he hears that your father has passed . . . . [You know how he gets.] He'll come home hopping mad.

And your sister—[you do recall she's still in service in Rouen, don't you?]—she's the one with the most to lose.

And, then, there's your other brother, Norman, studying in Paris. Those two will be beside themselves and come straight home as soon as they've heard about this whole sorry business.

[To signal the passage of time until early evening, mimed scenes might depict the lives of the siblings.]

[SCENE 2]

Enter [NORMAN,] **THE STUDENT:** Where's Mom? God bless you, one and—.

What?

DOLORES: Alas, son, you've no father but your older brother Henry now.

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Enter [**DAISY,**] **THE DAUGHTER:** Where's Mom? God bless you, one and—. What?

And peace be with you, everyone.

Enter **COLIN:** [What the hell's up with everyone?] You all in shock around here? What? Who died? You're just standing around.

Good evening, Mom. God bless you—. What?

DOLORES: It's awful: you've no father but your older brother Henry now.

NORMAN: As long as—. Stubborn fool! That clown? God willing, he won't be so pigheaded for once this time and we'll all be on the same page. [Surely, there's a settlement to be negotiated.]

COLIN: Hey, speaking of which, did our father leave a will when he died? What does it say?

DOLORES: He left everything to Henry. The whole estate. He's in charge now.

HENRY: And what of it? For starters, I *am* the oldest, aren't I? I am your new lord and master.

DAISY: Yessa massa. We couldn't be happier to be in your charge.

HENRY: [Hush, little baby, don't say a word,] Papa's gonna buy you . . . a bedspread!© Provided, that is, I can get to the swap meet and get a decent trade-in price for our black cow. It'll be scarlet red.

NORMAN: [What? The cow? Great syntax there, brother.] But I've yet to declare what I have in mind for my own situation. What about the business of my education? Did Father leave nothing for me by way of support?

DOLORES: Not one thing, dear, no. But it was his express wish that Henry provide for all three of you.

COLIN: [Fat chance.] He doesn't give a damn about me, and that's the truth.

DAISY: [{*To Henry*} I'm just *so* impressed with how concerned you are for Dad.]

He's not even worried about whether our Father art in Heaven.

HENRY: You got that right, sis. [Maybe he art, maybe he artn't.]

NORMAN: Yes, yes, Your Excellency, but surely you realize, my brother, that it now behooves you to provide for us, lest, [in defaming our late father's good name by your conduct,] you yourself become the object of defamation.

HENRY: Uh huh. Could be.

DOLORES: Come now, children, we'll get by. Let's just put our heads together and work this out as best we can. Of course, your brother will provide for you, as soon as he collects his inheritance.

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[{*To the audience*} *Provided* he collects, that is.]

COLIN: But what about the rest of us? Am I any less of a poor bastard than him? Or all of us? He never earned a dime his whole damn life.

DOLORES: But, my children, this is how it has always been done. It's the law. And the custom. And the customary law, established over three hundred years ago in order that the rich and powerful might live together in peace.

DAISY: Yeah, well the guy who put *that* law on the books can go straight to hell! He must've had some damn bee in his bonnet, that one, giving everything to the one son and, then, everybody else gets a big fat zero.

NORMAN: Could be. But, to make matters worse, then comes the lowest of low blows: it's always the family idiot who inherits at everyone else's expense, [regardless of the testator's intent]. You see it every day. And he holds that right in perpetuity.

HENRY: I'm gonna get me a velvet doublet too, now that Pop's passed away. [And I don't want nothin' to do with your testators!]

COLIN: The hell you say, boy! That's enough outta you. Now, cut the crap.

DOLORES: Henry, my son, it's only right that you should provide for his welfare, dear.

HENRY: He's gonna be—I got it!—a little matchstick boy! Now, there's a plum profession, *provided* he can get his hands on some sulfur and some wood. Five bucks, and he's got himself a career.

COLIN: Oh, Lord, this I pray:

May you . . . drop dead of a heart attack right now! That's it? That's all the benefit I'm to enjoy of our father's estate?

DAISY: And what about me, Mom? I'm of marriageable age now. Don't I get anything?

[*To Mom, Henry, and/or the audience*] I'm begging you: look out for me, please.

DOLORES: And so I shall, I swear.

Henry, my son, you must be sure to look after your sister, and provide for her dowry too—you hear me, boy?—should you find some worthy young man who proves himself to be loyal, faithful, and true.

HENRY: [Yeah, yeah, yeah. And speakin' of match-making:] next time I go by *my* big walnut tree, I'll give her three hundred nuts. And half a bushel of *my* peas. And a whole case of onions, and all the eggs from *my* hens in *your* basket, and a whole coopful of chickens. And *my* black-and-white cow, and a colander, and a little casserole, a pitcher, a pot, a mortar and pestle, a purse, two aprons, a belt, two knives, and a [little red riding]

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hood. And a dozen-and-a-half pies.

And you know what else you're gonna get? I'm hereby bequeathin' two nice roomy nightgowns for when I get you married off. Got plenty o' space in there for making the beast with two backs, four backs, whatever. It's gonna be a real clusterfuck.

DAISY: A remarkable endowment, to be sure.

What do you think, [Colin]? We're two peas in a pod, seems to me: the one just as well provided for as the other, now that we've got *him* looking out for our welfare. You think?

COLIN: *Welfare.* That's the damn word for it! From that *nouveau-riche* fool and his dumb fucking luck!

DOLORES: Lord have mercy, children, what kind of talk is this? I'm surprised at you. You're failing to consider that your welfare is now [entirely] up to him.

NORMAN: [*Motioning toward the armoire*] If you'd be good enough to—. Let's have a look at Father's will, shall we? Give it here, please, because this isn't over. Not by a long shot.

I'll be more reassured once I've verified the disposition of the assets.

HENRY: Nuh-uh! Not so fast there, bro! It's fine right where it is in my lockbox. [I'm in charge here!] Besides, I know the whole thing by heart.

To my mother, he left all the bread you see right there! It's toasted and everything. See? And his knife, and his nightcap with the furry lining and that little thingy sewn into it to cure them toothaches she gets. Long story short, he left her all she can eat. She gets a whole fuckin' buffet!

[*To Norman*] As for you: he was sayin' how you're gonna be a priest, I'll have you know, so you can pray for the souls of our family and friends and shit. I'm telling you just like he told me: them was his exact words. He left you just enough for any [good Christian] to get by. Dude. Builds character. [Left you his rosary too.] And—check it out—a couple o' hats: his old fedora and this here dunce cap, [right here, Mister Ivory Tower]. Plus, other items from around the house.

And, from that whole pile o' stuff: to my sister, he left his favorite tool—his blade—for when she's all ripe and ready to roll. She can use it to shave her twat, just like Mama used to shave hers back in the day—hell!—forever ago. But better mind the peckerwood 'cause—talk about your close shaves!—a guy can really take one on the chin, if you catch my drift. That blade is sharp: gonna pierce you through and through. And . . . cut![6]

COLIN: And what about me? What do I get? Green peas? Lilies of the

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valley in season? [Two figs and three asparagus? This is some beggars' banquet.]

HENRY: He left you a nice goose-quill pen to write with—[if you even know how]—and our old frying pan too ['cause it's outta the frying pan and into the fire with you, bro!] And, hey! That's what you're gonna use for your sulfur when you make them matches.

He also left to one of our neighbors—a good buddy o' his goes by the name o' [Tom or Harry or Dick or]—no! I got it: Michael!—he left him his best wines. And a nice brown bread, [some quiche,] a *croque-monsieur*, and, bottom line? Bottoms up! Basically, he said Mickey shouldn't leave nothin' in them bowls. And speakin' o' bowling:

As for the rest o' them goods, he left me the stick and the pins and the ball and the chain for—set 'em up, boys, it's time for a game of—. Hey! Who said life ain't all beer and skittles? And he left me a great big pole for my next visit to the table and, lemme tell ya: I'm gonna use it on some high-spirited little filly out there. She got the itch? I got the scratch 'cause—by hook or by crook or by snooker—you name the joint: I'm gonna rack her! You know what I'm talkin' about. I got me the ways and the means and the skills.

NORMAN: Could be, but I'm but a poor impoverished student, completely dependent on the timely disbursal of financial aid. This is torture, as you can well imagine, these delaying tactics of yours: especially by someone who's . . . . You're practically illiterate!

HENRY: And you, sir: You think you're gonna get into some *argumentum ad homo* with me? Just because you're home from your fancy Paris-League school, you're gonna tell me what's *ipso dipso*?

NORMAN: You call *that* Latin, you damn *parvenu*?

HENRY: Musta left my Donatella in the kitchen. With my Strunk and Wagnalls. But *ego* got some *magnibus savoir-fairibus*! Here, I got one for you! Now, riddle me this: Which animal's got two ears and a tail right between the eyes?

NORMAN: I couldn't possibly say.

HENRY: And you're supposed to be the smart one around here!

NORMAN: Yes, I am; but there's no mention of anything like that in my book. That, I can assure you.

HENRY: I'll give you a hint: it can look at a king.

[Whatsa matter? Cat got your tongue?]

It's a cat, dumbass!, lickin' its own asshole! Get it? Do I know my shit here or what? I swear! You don't know nothin'.

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Now, lemme try one on—. Okay, Ma, I got one for you too. Tell me: What's the proudest thingy in the [whole wide] world?

DOLORES: What is it, son? A lion, of course.

HENRY: [*He makes the sound of a buzzer.*] Wrong! Not even close, I swear!

But, hey! Since I gotta spell it out for you, Mother dear: it's a turd!—it's true—and I'm gonna tell you why:

You see the Pope himself passin' by one, that thing ain't steppin' aside! Get it?[7]

NORMAN: If you'd be good enough, Mother, to convey to my brother that I'll do what I must and that I'm more than happy to become a priest. But, in order to accomplish that, I must be a bit better positioned—[enfranchised, if you will]. I'm entitled to a title, as well as to a parcel of land from our estate to be deeded to me.

[**HENRY:** Oh, no, he deedn't!]

DOLORES: [Oh, yes, *indeed-ed.*] Henry, my son, my eldest: enough! He's your brother, a poor struggling student. If he's to pray to the good Lord for the soul of your father then, for God's sake, he must indeed be a bit better positioned. He's entitled to a title, and to a parcel of land from our estate deeded to him. And that's that. That's all there is to it.

HENRY: Yup. That's all there is to it. Say no more, Ma, it's done.

NORMAN: But, tell me, brother dear: *When* will it be done? Before you leave here today? And *where*? Which property is it? [As the distributee and devisee, I have the right to know the extent to which you're prepared to respect your fiduciary duty.]

HENRY: [*Fiduciary*? Fuck-*you*-ciary!] Where else? There's plenty o' room out there! To the dustbowl with you, Joad! And, if my sheeps got enough wool, you won't want for nothin'. Now go knit yourself a nice sweater-vest.[8]

NORMAN: That's hardly the kind of in*vest*iture I had in mind.

Now, you listen to me, pal: Have you no plans at all to look after your family? Don't you care how this looks to all our friends? [Do you have such little faith in your kin as to refuse to show us the provisions that father made for his property?]

COLIN: Jesus H. Christ! Better watch your back, boy, because—day or night—I cross your path, I'll be giving you your fair share: of my fist. You'll get what's coming to you, all right. They'll have to carry you out feet first!

DOLORES: [*To Colin*] Temper, temper. You're always looking for trouble. And a lawsuit.

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[{*To Henry*} And you: I didn't raise you like that.]

DAISY: You raised him exactly like that and, by God, I say we sue! We'll take him to court.

[Colin, Norman, and Daisy move physically on Henry, inspiring Dolores.]

DOLORES: To which I say: I'm in! Let's get him! All three of you now: it's all for one and one for all! Let's get him! [I, Dolores,] say we make him feel the pain.

COLIN: And he better pay up fast because I'll be damned if I don't get my fair share off him. And you can take that to the bank 'cause I'm leavin' right now to squander the whole kit and caboodle—you hear me?—his whole damn estate! Fast as I can, that's right. Over and out!

NORMAN:

That's that, folks, beyond a reasonable doubt.
You work your whole lives for ungrateful heirs,
acquiring worldly goods, day in, day out,
to pass on to your children, but beware!

DAISY:

That's that, folks, beyond a reasonable doubt.
You work your whole lives for ungrateful heirs . . .

DOLORES:

Acquiring worldly goods, day in, day out,
to pass on to your children, but—beware!—
and make your wills while still alive, I swear!
Avoid the probate battle. Sort it out.

HENRY:

A song, beyond a reasonable doubt!
But pay up, first. Hope you enjoyed the show.
Sing out! Show us the money, folks! Case closed.

[They all sing their good-bye song.][9]

The End

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NOTES

1. There is some confusion in the opening moments about "Le Petit Colin," who is clearly the youngest but whom Dolores describes as *ton grand frere*, only to have Henry invoke *mon petit frere* a few lines later (*RLV*, 269r; *RFMSJ*, 3: 4). It could be a copyist's mistake, but I prefer to read it as comic irony: like calling a massive hulk "Shorty." I resisted going with the old gag from the *Bob Newhart Show* and naming the men "Darryl" and "my other brother, Darryl."

2. See *SFQS*, note 8; https://sottiesetfarces.wordpress.com/2017/04/14/le-trocheur-de-maris/ (accessed 14 July 2020).

3. The expression dates at least as far back as the refrain of a tenth-century song edited by Ferrand in *La Muse Normande*: "Et n'ayez pu comme bastards de Caux / *La queuz d'un vez en guise de moustache*" (146; his emphasis). Following a local meaning in Godefroy, I think the punchline might have something to do with "a rumpled old dick passing for whiskers." Stay tuned for Henry's upcoming riddle about another *queue of another whiskered creature*: a cat's tail (below, note 7).

4. For a taste of the more musical set pieces, also flagged by Brown (*MFST*, 82; 242), here is the Middle French at (3: 3-4)—and a bit more than usual since our play is not terribly accessible:

LA MERE *commence.*

Vray Dieu, tant je suys couroucee,
Vous m'avés bien la mort donnee,
Qui m'avés osté mon mary;
J'esperoye qui seroyt guery,
Mais la mort m'a bien ofencée,
qui m'a osté mon bon mary.
Il m'a en grand charge laissée
Troys enfants, sans mon filz Henry;
J'esperoye qui seroyt guery,
Mais la mort m'a bien ofencée.

HENRY *commence en chantant.*

Y sont en grant pensee
Les gens d'armes du roy,
Que feront [seront?] ceste annee,
Je vous promais, ma foy.
Qui vous a ainsy courousée?
Qu'avés vous à pleurer, ma mere?

We've seen a version of Henry's song in *Wife Swap* (*HD*, 292), also from the *RLV* (#74; *RFMSJ*, 4: 7), which I translated as "When soldiers come to town / I'm in a snit because / They fire a couple rounds."

5. Here is the play's key and recurrent legalistic phrase: *mais que* (3: 4). It runs the gamut from "as soon as" to "provided that" to "assuming" to "as long as."

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6. I'm not making up the *vagina dentata* feel for Daisy's obscene inheritance, which includes the hapax *anquemelle*: *Il en a laisé à ma seur / Sa* queulx *avec son raseur; / Et quant elle sera à poinct, / Elle en* ratissera maujoinct. */ Il y a je ne sçay combien, / Ma mere en ratisoyt le sien. / Mais elle estoyt sy fine* alumelle*, / Qu'el en coupa une* anquemelle [*hoquemelle*] / *Et le perça tout à travers* (3: 11–12; my emphasis). An *alumelle* is not only a blade: it refers to both the male and female genitalia. On the *chapel:* it's a hat, of course, but it is also the foreskin of the penis; plus, Henry is unlettered enough to confuse *chapel* with *chapelet* (a rosary).

7. Here is the Middle French for the riddles: for Norman, the setup is: *Or me dictes quel beste c'est / Qui a la queue entre deulx yeulx.* Answer: *C'est un chat qui lesque son cul* (3: 13). This makes for a fun intertext with *Jeninot qui fit un roi de son chat* (*RBM*, #17), projected for my next volume. For Mom, the question is: *Or me dictes donc quelle* chosse */ Est la plus orguilleuse du monde*? Answer: *c'est un estron . . . sy voyés passer le pape / Y ne s'oteroyt de sa place* (3: 13–14). The word *chosse* is a complete orphan: not a rhyme to be found for it in the whole play.

8. After Norman's brilliant wordplay on *departir*, denoting both "to leave" and "to divide an estate," we learn the specific location: *les Vatines d'Ausy* (3: 15) or, for Spada, *les Vatines d'Aussay*, 4 km from Caux (Spada, 354; 386–87). Lintilhac, however, prefers to correct the Middle French to the equivalent of "get lost:" *va t'en d'icy* (215).

9. For music, you might try, depending on your prediction for their success, "I Fought the Law."© Here is the Middle French of the closing set piece (3: 16):

COLIN

. . . Pour despencer toute sa terre

L'ESCOLLIER

Vous pouvés veoir, sans plus enquerre,
Des héritiers mal congnoisans,
Entre vous qui voulés aquerre
Des biens mondains pour vos enfans.

LA FILLE

Vous pouvés veoir, sans plus enquerre,
Des héritiers mal congnoisans.

LA MERE

Entre vous qui voullés aquerre
Des biens mondains à vos enfans,
Faictes leur pars en vos vivans,
Pour éviter entre eulx la guerre.

HENRY

Une chanson sans plus enquerre,
Avant que partir de ce lieu,
Or sus chantés pour dire adieu.

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8.

Talking Turkey, or, *A Pilgrim's Progress*

[La Farce de Colin, filz de Thévot le maire, qui vient de Naples et amaine ung Turc prisonnier]

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MAYOR ZELL (Thévot, le Maire)
COLIN, his SON (Colin)
[GLORIA,] the WOMAN (La Femme)
The PILGRIM (Le Pèlerin)

PRODUCTION NOTES

It's fascinating, really. In what it's fair to call a "cycle" (*RF*, 5: 167–82), there are multiple early and modern editions of this anonymous play, which appeared in the *RBM* (#47), the *RC* (#5), and Rousset (#2). Further editions were then published by Montaiglon, *ATF*, 2: 388–405; Mabille, *CFSM*, 2: 7–32; Caron, *Collection*, 2: 2; and Brunet, *RPF*, 1: 23–45; followed by Cohen, *RC*, 35–41; Tissier, *RF*, #5: 161–228; Martin, *SFQS* (https://sottiesetfarces.wordpress.com/2016/09/05/colin-filz-de-thevot/), and Koopmans, *RFlorence*, 97–108. Like Tissier and Martin, I follow the *RBM* version, first published in Lyon on 20 June 1542. In excellent condition with only three orphans among its 369 octosyllabic verses (*RF*, 5: 163), it is variously entitled—with some appositive commas added for clarity—the *Farce nouvelle à quatre personnaiges, c'est assavoir Colin, filz de Thévot le maire, qui vient de Naples et ameine ung Turc prisonnier* (*RBM*); the *Farce nouvelle à quatre personnages, très bonne et très joyeuse de Thévot, qui vient de Naples et amaine un Turc prisonnier* (*RC*); *Thevot et Colin* (*RFlorence*); or, in Rousset, the *Farce de Colin, fils de Thénot le Maire, qui revient de la guerre de Naples, & ameine un Pèlerin prisonnier pensant que ce feust un Turc* (23–45). As earlier, I supplement the *RBM* story with any significant lessons from the *RC* and Rousset (marked with angle brackets but with minor variants

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unmarked). Tissier went on to translate our farce into modern French (*FFMA*, #28, 2: 145–59), but for all its appeal, there was no translation into English or any other modern vernacular. Summaries can be found in Petit de Julleville (*RTC*, 121–23), Faivre (*Répertoire*, 100–2), and Delepierre (*DLU*, 112).

With highly localized events clearly taking place during the third of the Italian Wars (1501–1504), *Talking Turkey* takes us on a tour of various pilgrimage sites on the route of Saint Jacques de Compostelle, including "Bicêtre" and "Grenelle" in the Paris region (*RF*, 5: 196n).[1] The play's most important location, however, is one that is never seen and that may or may not have been visited militarily by the foolish Colin, the son of the titular Thévot. (*Thévot* sounds like *dévot*, whence my "Mayor Zell": a *zealot* who's more of a *zell-out*.[2]) His Honor, the Mayor, is also a traveling judge or *juge sous l'orme* (*ATF*, 2: 403; above "Introd.," § "Legal Players"); and he and his progeny make for quite the comedy team. Falling short of the stock character type, they are not exactly *milites gloriosi*. More like *milites gloriosi manqués*: braggart-soldier wannabees who give us not so much tales from the front as Pathelinesque courtroom drama of trial and error. In one corner, it's Colin, the pusillanimous accused: Zell's eldest (*grant filz*) and a classic fool from a long line of farcical Colins. In the other corner, it's the well-spoken if unschooled and unnamed farmer, "Gloria" (for a feminist, lawyerly Gloria Allred type), whose quest for justice results in the proverbial *dialogue de sourds*. Given at least three competing narratives, it is often difficult to discern who did what to whom and where. In one cause of action, it is a question of the theft of fowl; in another, of a disgraceful desertion; in a third, of the rape of a chambermaid (vividly illustrated in Brunet, *RPF*, after p. 34); and, beyond that, God only knows what went down in the "cheese cellar." Small wonder that the *Pathelin*'s tagline about stolen sheep vs. stolen cloth morphs here into an interspecies analogue about stolen chickens vs. stolen what-have-you. Instead of *revenons à nos moutons* ("let's get back to our sheep," namely, "get back to the point"), the vibe of *Talking Turkey* is that we must get back to our chickens: *revenons à nos gélines*? Or is it to our cock-a-doodle-doo (*MFST*, 202)? One thing is for sure: somebody is getting back at somebody in Scene 4, a macaronic pièce de résistance.

Colin is ready to talk turkey. Make that Turkey and its Sultan (*le Grant Turc* [2: 388]). To paraphrase the celebrated line from Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*, this piece obliviously inquires: *Being Turkish. What's all that about?* (*Mais comment peut-on être Turc?*). When Colin comes marching home, it's with a prisoner in tow whom he believes to be a Turk, owing to the man's largely indecipherable hodgepodge of French, German, Latin, Flemish,

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Hebrew, and even English (below, notes 9 to 14). Nevertheless, the farfetched premise is minimally grounded in actual historical events. As Martin recalls, King Ferdinand I, ruler of Naples between 1458 and 1494, had teamed up with Bayazid II, Ottoman sultan from 1481 to 1512 (*SFQS*, note 3), better known as Bazajet (a future subject for Racine.)

What, then, is the verdict of which trial and for which delict? As we shall see, it's all very open-ended, absurdist, and ambiguous (Guynn, "A Justice"; Faivre, *Répertoire*, 101). Farce sometimes likes it like that, as in *Confessions of a Medieval Drama Queen* (*ID*, #4), reveling in the simultaneous suspension of belief and disbelief (*DBD*, 156–68). Anything can happen when chicken-shit turkeys talk turkey.

Sets, Costumes, or Props

Several props link *Talking Turkey* with *Who's Your Daddy?* (#5), also from the *RBM* (#20): an escritoire and a cloth pourpoint. Instead of a *jacquette*, though, we find a *jacques de touelle* plus a *hocqueton* (English aketon or gambeson). The aketon, a doublet or padded defensive jacket, could be worn alone, while the *jacques* might be donned over or under the armor. If under, it was a leotard-like equivalent of a coat of mail or hauberk (Rousset, 30; *SFQS*, note 10; *RF*, 5: 206n); if over, it served as a cassock of sorts, possibly emblazoned with the family crest or, for crusaders, a cross. For comedic expedience, try dressing Colin like so: his tattered outer *jacques* bears the family's "heraldic" ox or cow (he's a regular *Game of Thrones* "onion knight"); underneath lies a coat of mail; and under that, Colin's aketon, which, at one point, is virtually all he has left. Pictured in the *RBM* (Figure 2), he is a caricature of a *franc archier* or "free archer" (Figure 3) who's pretty much parading around in his PJs. Needless to say, his helmet is history (*RF*, 5: 195n), and so too is its inner cap or coif (*grand bonnet* or *hault bonnet*), which could easily have doubled as a fool's cap (*ATF*, 2: 392; *RC*, v. 96). Alternatively, updated costuming might inspire military fatigues or a field jacket. For weaponry, Colin wields a wide-bladed dagger—a *dague à large rouelle* (2: 392) or *rouvelle* (*RC*, v. 84)—which I recommend supplementing with an absurd fly swatter.

The complainant, Gloria, in a simple dress with a deep-pocketed apron, transports numerous legal documents along with various comestibles, to wit: apples and a cheese-curing basket (*chasière*). As for Mayor Zell, in addition to sporting juridical garb with the family crest (*SFQS*, note 51), he needs both a bucket and a particular type of legwear, the better to set up a closing gag that unfolds in the form of a spelling bee. Technically, the *houseaulx* were tall, sup-

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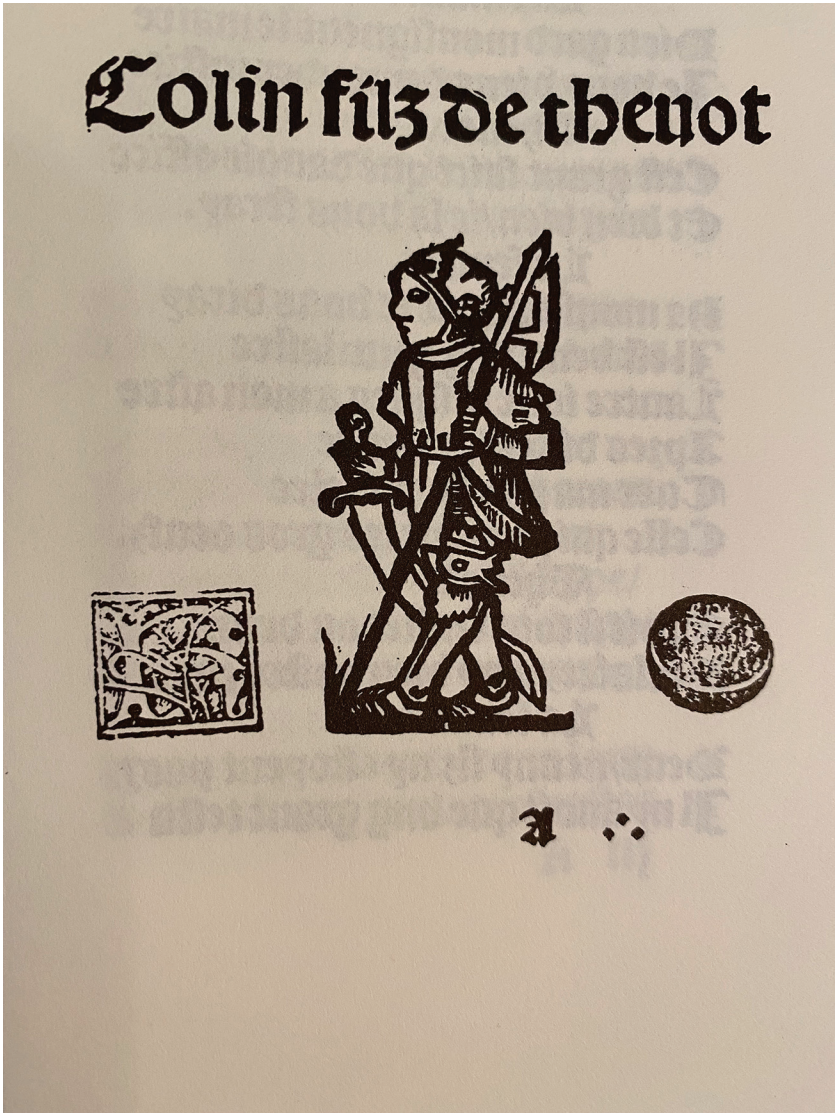

Figure 2. Title page, *Colin, Filz de Thévot. Recueil du British Museum*, #47.

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Figure 3. A free archer. Vinkhuijzen collection of military uniforms. New York Public Library. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Franc_archers_(NYPL_b14896507–1235307).tiff

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ple boots to keep out mud; so, galoshes work well (and you'll see them again in #10, *Witless Protection*). And, by all means, have some fun with the prisoner, who turns out to be a pilgrim. Be sure that he has his pilgrim's purse (*besace*), his badge, and, inside his consecrated soldier's bag of personal effects (*bagage*, *brague*, or *bague*), he carries an important letter (*RF*, 5: 203n; 216n). Your typical pilgrim would be garbed in a long coat, scarf, and wide-brimmed hat (Figure 4). This satirical send-up of one, however, is in possession of a simple staff (*bourdon*) and an extremely phallic steel-tipped club (*un grant baston ferré*), perhaps a spiked "morning star" (*ATF*, 2: 398; *RC*, v. 222; Rousset, 37). If you prefer, have him sport the Crusader's tell-tale, red-crossed tunic.[3] Or go full-out wacko with high camp, dress him up like an early American Pilgrim, and set the whole play at a culturally reappropriated Thanksgiving!

Scholarly References to Copyrighted Materials (in order of appearance and indicated by © within the text)

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"Hit the Road, Jack." By Percy Mayfield. BMI Work #571691.

"Fanfare for Twentieth-Century Fox." By Alfred Newman. ASCAP Work ID: 660080373.

"When the Saints Come Marching In." Traditional.

"Pop, Goes the Weasel." Nursery rhyme.

"*Chevaliers de la Table Ronde*." Traditional.

"These Boots Are Made for Walkin'." By Lee Hazlewood. ASCAP Work ID: 500170925.

"Piano Lesson." ["If You Don't Mind My Saying So."] By Meredith Willson. ASCAP Work ID: 460038477.

"To Be a Pilgrim." ["He Who Would Valiant Be."] Hymn based on lyrics by John Bunyan (1684).

"Istanbul, [not Constantinople]." By James Kennedy and Nat Simon. ASCAP Work ID: 390147090.

"Down by the Riverside." ["I Ain't Gonna Study War No More."] Spiritual.

[SCENE 1]

[On one side of the stage is Mayor Zell's "estate," its large gate barely visible to the audience. Near the city gate and the surrounding hemp fields, the Mayor is holding court at the Tree of Justice. An opening mime might depict the various backstories to be referenced throughout.]

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Figure 4. A traditionally garbed German pilgrim. Colomannus; Gottfried Deppisch: *Geschichte und Wunder-Wercke des heiligen Colomanni Königlichen Pilgers und Martyrers.* Vienna: Frantz André Kirchberger, 1743. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Colomannus.jpg

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Mayor Zell begins [gesticulating dramatically as music plays in the background.[4]*]*

MAYOR ZELL: Long live your Mayor Zell!—that's me!—and Colin! That's my eldest, who's been off fighting the Turks, you see, and, God willing, he'll end them too! You know what, folks? I hope he makes shish kebabs of the lot of 'em! And the Sultan too! But he'll be back home one of these days. It's coming up on six months now since he left. And without objection, I might add. [He didn't even put up a fight,] although, I must say . . . if he should happen to have gotten it into his head to go by way of—. Oh, no! not Naples! ⟨What if that's where he led the troops?⟩ He's a goner, for sure, ⟨him and his whole battalion!⟩ What I mean to say is:

Gotcha! Surrender Naples! And pity the fool who tries to get away from him because, right or wrong, dead or alive, there's no escape from—wham! bam! pow!—*c'est lui! c'est lui!*© Not nobody, not no how! ⟨You've never seen anything like it, folks! Mother Mary,⟩ he's as brave as a lion! Never has there been such a champion in battle nor so valiant a warrior. Always the first, he is, to rush right into the fray and . . . run away, run away!—[no, not you, folks!]—run away and beat himself a hasty retreat! Or change sides—and fast!—just like my granddaddy before me used to do back in the day. What so bravely he fought—him too—to flee the scene. Thought he'd get a medal out of it or something, or at least up his social standing. But, then, one time, he was retreating, fast as he could, and he tumbles ass-backwards into a quarry, see? So, he's fallen and he can't get up. And nobody ever came to pull him out. He just waited, [and waited, and waited] till the day he died.

[Enter Gloria.]

[GLORIA,] THE WOMAN: God be with you, Milord Mayor. I'm here seeking justice.

MAYOR ZELL: Heavy is the head that wears the—. [You know what I mean.] 'Tis a weighty office that I occupy. [*He motions for a bribe.*]

Very well, then, Madam, very well. If it's justice you want, then justice you'll get.

GLORIA: And boy, oh boy, just wait till you hear, Milord Zell. It was just the other day, after our midday repast: there's some *nouveau-riche* joker comes by my place and kills my best speckled hen! The one that laid the big fat eggs.

MAYOR ZELL: Was he alone or by himself? Were there perhaps two of them? This is a courtroom, Madam. Be specific.

GLORIA: Two of them? No, there was no "they" there. It was just the one fat-

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headed fool in some dinky coat of mail—[and a gambeson or an aketon, *to be specific*]—what finished off my big fat hen.

MAYOR ZELL: [*Aside*] Could this have been my son Colin? He does tend to stick it to 'em every which way.

GLORIA: ⟨Lord have mercy⟩, Milord, he killed my cock! And that's not the last of the outrages he committed against me. He stole two cheeses too! That's one bad boy, I do solemnly swear.

MAYOR ZELL: This calls for an investigation, the better to identify the perpetrator.

GLORIA: And then, to add insult to injury, he just leaves his mare grazing: in *my* garden. It's true, Milord Mayor, and truth will out.

[SCENE 2]

[Enter Colin.]

COLIN: To hell with the army! Maybe some other year!

Yo, Pop! I'm back!

MAYOR ZELL: Colin? Back so soon? ⟨Couldn't stick it out at the front lines, eh?⟩ How's the war effort going?

COLIN: Forget about it, Pop. Not my scene and I ain't never gettin' nowhere near that place again! ⟨No way, no how!⟩ Not for as long as I live, [which is kinda the whole point, you know?]

MAYOR ZELL: What about casualties, son? What kind of numbers are we talking about? At least catch me up on the war. What ever happened to [your buddies,] Winchester, Obelix, [and Casey-DC]? *War* you or *war*en't you going to mention them? [*He chuckles at his own joke.*][5]

COLIN: They was readyin' for battle when I left. Shiverin' in the bushes, they was—and it was plenty hot outside too—on accounta they was chicken!

But, hey, Pop! You ain't, by any chance, seen your mare come by this way?

MAYOR ZELL: My mare? Why? Is she lost? Don't tell me you—.

COLIN: Somebody swiped her, Pop, I swear! And she kinda got away. Don't rightly know ⟨where she got off to⟩ or who mighta took her.

[Mayor Zell registers extreme displeasure.]

For God's sake, it ain't like I didn't tell her to come back. I gave her the sign and everything!

GLORIA: It was *you*! You're the one who killed my hen! I recognize you now!

COLIN: [*Ignoring Gloria*] I was kinda out on recon, right? ⟨Out in the field.⟩ Me and my boys. ⟨And I'm, like, takin' no prisoners⟩ and, then, I seen 'er, Pop. The army! And lemme tell ya: was court ever in session out there!

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You could hear they was negotiatin' and shit—anybody could tell them chickens was gonna come home to roost any minute—and it was gonna be open season, Pop. On *me*! You shoulda seen it, I swear! ⟨You can't hardly blame me for gettin' scared.⟩ They're, like, all armed to the teeth; and all I got is this lousy, shrimpy aketon.

MAYOR ZELL: Wait. Once you got to the army, were you not *Zell*-ous in battle? You didn't stand your ground? [Did you at least put up a fight?]

GLORIA: [*Possibly inspecting the aketon for a shrimp instead of an ox*] Aha! It was you! *You* killed her, I do solemnly swear, with one of those great big curved daggers! Takes some kinda bollocks, if you ask me.

COLIN: I'd had 'er in my sights for about three days already but, I gotta say: once I was, like, up close and personal and heard them trumpets blarin,' I was like, I'm outta here! Boy, howdy! That was no place for me!

GLORIA: You took her! Jesus H. Christ on the cross, hallelujah, and cock-a-doodle-doo-doo! ⟨Chasin' after her like that.⟩ Runnin' around like a chicken with its head cut the hell off. [*She imitates a chicken.*] And, then, you killed my cock!

Give me justice, Milord Mayor!

MAYOR ZELL: That was very wrong of you, Colin. ⟨You're hardly blameless here, you know,⟩ if you did everything she says.

COLIN: You think it's any skin off my nose? I'm the one lost my helmet out there! Old bat grabs me by the neck and pops me one, for God's sake—with her fist, Pop!—and, pow! Right in the kisser! Gets in five or six punches too! And, then, she grabs the coif right off my head! [My *chapeau*, Pop! My *grand bonnet*! She took it.]

MAYOR ZELL: *Grand bonnet ou bonnet grand.* How could you have been so stupid as to comport yourself in this manner? ⟨You just let her make mincemeat out of you like that?⟩

COLIN: Jesus H. Christ, [Pop]! Old bat was strong and—hey!—⟨she started it!⟩ And, if she wouldn'ta knocked me down so hard when she was beatin' the crap outta me, who knows how many licks she woulda gotten in? I swear! But I sure got mine, lemme tell ya.

MAYOR ZELL: Oh, for Chrissakes, Colin! ⟨Seems to me I always⟩ taught you way better than that, ⟨if you'd only—. Jeez,⟩ you have no idea what it was like back in the day when *I* was off to war. Want to know what *I* used to do? I always stood my ground. Kept my eye on the *boule*, I did. ⟨And you never would have caught *me* fleeing the battlefield. [Not when the *boule*'s in *my* court.] And I'm no deserter either.⟩

GLORIA: It was you! He took my chicken and my cock!

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I respectfully request [an expedited hearing, Your Honor.] Let's get on with it. Please.

MAYOR ZELL: ⟨That was very wrong of you, Colin. I mean, really: letting yourself get beat up by a woman. Whatever would you have done if you'd crossed swords with a real *gendarme* in battle?

COLIN: Never been a big fan o' conflict, Pop. Too much risk and peril and shit.

MAYOR ZELL: [But she was alone and by herself.] It's not as if you had to take on two at a time.

And I don't see [the rest of your uniform, son]. Over your pourpoint. [{*To the audience*} What does he need? A *PourPoint* presentation?] Where is it, son? Your *jacques*?[6]

COLIN: *Jacques* be nimble, *Jacques* be quick, *Jacques* watch out for that candlestick! I left it behind for whoever. I had to get outta there, I tell ya!⟩

MAYOR ZELL: Such a bad boy, Colin. You just lose it and, then, it's hit the road, *Jacques*?©

COLIN: Well, duh. Don'tcha think you run faster in your underwear than when you're wearin' all that junk?

MAYOR ZELL: Good thinking, my boy. Smart lad.

COLIN: And I was sneaky about it too, Pop. Pulled it off and *ecscaped*. Totally on the DL. Right under everybody's noses!

GLORIA: It was you—I swear!—while I was out in the hemp fields! You climbed right on up there and went digging around in my cheese vault!

Let's call a spade a spade here, Your Honor. I cannot tell a lie.

COLIN: I served bravely, Pop, I'll have you know.

Yeah, yeah, yeah: maybe I lost some o' my shit out on the field. Outta my purse, you know? ⟨But, sometimes, when you gotta go, you gotta go, and just leave your money on the table.⟩

MAYOR ZELL: Let's see that dagger of mine. It's been quite a while since I had it in hand. Give it here.

COLIN: Mary, Mother of—! I lost 'er, Pop. ⟨In the name of Saint Johnson,⟩ old bat ripped that sucker right outta the sheath! And, if I wouldn'ta beat it, I'm thinkin' she was really gonna haul off and whack me good. But I *ecscaped*, Pop, ⟨on accounta⟩—I swear!—I just turned tail and ran!

GLORIA: ⟨And, showing no mercy whatsoever for my poor little chicken!⟩ Snatched her up right out of the nest as soon as you got there. And I know where you stuffed her too! Right into that big, bulging purse o' yours.

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COLIN: So, when we get to the stronghold, I hear them horns again, right? *Ta-da-da! da-da-da-da-da-da!*© And, me, I'm, like, watchin' the troops come marchin' in© 'cause it's gonna be, like, ⟨incoming! So, I'm outta there and—remember, Pop—I'm much lighter now without all that junk.⟩ And it's gonna be all, like, *bada-bing*, *bada-bam*, *bada-boom* 'cause one of 'em's shoutin' "Ready, aim, fire!"[7]

MAYOR ZELL: How would *you* know, boy?

COLIN: I've heard things. And I heard the call to arms myself—didn't I?—when he was rallyin' the troops? So, I hightail it into the mountains—right?—and I leave my buddies behind.

GLORIA: You ate my geese too! And all their little goslings in tow. ⟨Either alone or by yourself or with some buddy of yours from your regiment! Another deserter, I suppose.⟩

MAYOR ZELL: Irrelevant, Madam, and immaterial! Quit clouding the issue about those who serve.

COLIN: [And I didn't have no time for no dessert neither!]

[*To Gloria*] Hey! Whaddaya gotta come around here makin' trouble for? I am innocent! I deny everything! [*He brandishes a ridiculous weapon.*]

MAYOR ZELL: Whoa, not so fast there, Colin. Easy does it, son. Back off. Stand down.

[*To the audience*] He's a brave one, he is.

GLORIA: ⟨Yeah, yeah, yeah, a real pistol: serving himself every which way. "Back off," my ass! He's not fooling anybody!⟩

It's all just like I said, Mister Mayor, sure as I'm standing here.

[*To Colin*] It was you, I said! You can disguise yourself all you want: I'd know you anywhere from that stupid uniform. ⟨You were wearing that long, thick *jacques* of yours, weren't you now? You know: What soldiers wear, with their illustrious family crest?⟩

[{*To the audience*} I know our costume budget wasn't much but this is ridiculous.

Talk about frumpy! And don't even get me started on—. What are these supposed to be anyway? Combat boots? Ha!

COLIN: Your mother wears combat boots!

GLORIA]: ⟨—Which is why I've come before his Honor: to make application that he adjudicate and give me justice.⟩ [{*She points to what remains of Colin's armor.*} And what kind of *aketon* are you trying to pull with *that* thing?]

MAYOR ZELL: And we shall *act on* your case in due course, Madam. All

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in good time, ⟨as befits our office.⟩ I'll judge when I judge. Don't worry about it.

GLORIA: ⟨It was him! He's the one killed my chicken. And he knocked over one of my pots too!

And you, Mayor Zell-Out! Am I going to prevail here or what?⟩ Give me justice, I said.

⟨**MAYOR ZELL:** [*To Colin*] And you, sir: What do you have to say for yourself?⟩

GLORIA: [*To Colin*] And *you*, you damn chicken-licker: you did the same thing to my cock!

And that's not all, Mayor Zell. I must tell you, sir: he perpetrated yet another outrage against me, and I'll tell you how. He stuck it to my chambermaid too! Two or three times! That's some fine upstanding citizen you raised there, *Monsieur*. Mounts that pony and does her good 'n' bad!

MAYOR ZELL: [{*To Gloria*} Madam, don't be an oxymoron!]

[*To Colin*] Is this true?

GLORIA: Yes, [it's true!] I'm the one found the pair of them together! This is an open-and-shut case, Your Honor. What more proof do you need?

COLIN: Hey, lady! How's your eyesight anyway? Like you could tell from so far away. [Some witness.

{*Indicating the audience*} You're as bad as that bunch o' voyeurs out there!

When you *assume*, Madam, you make an *ass* of *u* and *me*!] Which is why, you big sourpuss, it's best not to mix apples and lemon balls. And to make an exit before it all blows up in your face!

GLORIA: I really must have a word with you, Zell, because, if this is all you propose to do about my case, then I object. Formally and strenuously: ⟨on both the primary and secondary *clauses* of action.⟩ And, if I'm forced to stand *my* ground, I'll have no choice but to lodge a *fornical* appeal. [Or I'll file in another jurisdiction. Or seek a change of venue. Or demand your recusal. Or go judge-shopping. Or whatever the hell else they did in the Middle Ages. And I'll ask for court costs too!] Let the chips fall where they may. I'll take my chances.[8]

MAYOR ZELL: Good God, [woman,] there's no need to make a federal case out of it. I'm simply not yet ready to rule at this time.

GLORIA: Fine. If that's how it's going to be, I've had enough. I'm leaving. ⟨But I'll be back!⟩ [*She gathers her papers and exits in a huff.*]

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[SCENE 3]

COLIN: [*To Zell and the audience*] I thought she'd never leave!

⟨Okeydokey, then, Pop! Now that that nasty woman's finally gone, I can let you in on a little secret and⟩ put an end to this here guessing game.

[Let's talk turkey, Pop.] It was me! I killed the chicken.

She's all goin' off half-cocked, round and round the mulberry bush,© and I'm, like, I come from behind, spear that little birdie with my dagger, and pop, goes the weasel!© Talk about your shish kebabs! Chick had it comin'.

MAYOR ZELL: Colin, that woman had every right to come forward and lodge a complaint. ⟨She was in the right and you, son, were in the wrong.⟩ Now, listen to me and do exactly like I tell you because . . . . I *am* curious, though, ⟨seeing as *you* would normally be the one on the run:⟩ However did you manage to give chase so bravely? I mean, hot pursuit to the death? You?

COLIN: What? You think all I got between the ears is—? Never you mind, 'cause I done you one better than that, Pop. With my own two hands! It just so happens, I snagged me—[drumroll, please!]—nothing more and nothing less than—. And it ain't like that cow you ran off with that time neither! ⟨Talk about your brave warriors.⟩

MAYOR ZELL: Bested me, did you, Colin? Tell me, son, ⟨and do get on with it.⟩ Let's go! Did you perform some even greater feat?

COLIN: I got me a prisoner, Pop! Captured him on the road, I did. I think he's one o' them Saracens too 'cause he sure talks some kinda gobbledygook. Caught him at the foot of a great big cross on the way from Naples to Rome and, lemme tell ya: ⟨he's a big boy!⟩ You ain't never seen a man like that; so, thank God, I was brave!

MAYOR ZELL: Nice work, son, good show. Go on, then, Colin. Bring him here.

COLIN: Better you should come along with me, Pop. [Change o' venue and such] 'cause I'm fixin' to leave him right where he is. Wouldn't wanna lose him. Plus, he's got a great big stick with a huge tip made outta steel! Mother Mary, Pop, he's awful scary.

[Colin motions for his father to follow. They continue their dialogue peripatetically until they reach Zell's property.]

MAYOR ZELL: I've got a great big staff of my own, you know, son: my own personal morning star. Now, where did you stash him? Have you got him

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locked up somewhere? ⟨Show me.⟩ If you didn't secure him properly, I'll help you catch him if I can.

COLIN: He ain't goin' nowhere, Pop. See for yourself. I stashed him right over there behind the gate to our place. [Check out what's behind Door Number One.] There he is.

[SCENE 4]

[The prisoner can now be seen, tied to the gate or behind a makeshift enclosure. He is gesticulating wildly, air punching, kicking with his giant boots, etc. in a futile attempt to reveal his identity through a game of charades.]

MAYOR ZELL: He's not trying to—? He doesn't wish to strike us, does he?

COLIN: Get a load o' that mug, wouldya?

MAYOR ZELL: *En garde!* Back off, boy, back off, before I skewer you!

See how brave I am?

He's a big one, all right! You really captured him all by yourself? That was very brave of you, Colin. Good man.

COLIN: Went down just like that! For a nap. ⟨I waited till he was sound asleep, you know?⟩ I could tell when I heard him snoring; so, that's when I got my courage up and pounced.

MAYOR ZELL: Yes, I see: for fear of being spotted, yes. ⟨He'd have been unlikely to notice. Excellent moment to pounce.⟩ And high time too.

[*To the Pilgrim*] You there, Butterball! How much you gonna cough up for ransom there, boy?

[The Pilgrim makes furious motions.]

I'll be damned if—.

THE PILGRIM: *Ach du leiber Wiener schnitzel! Gott in foutu Himmel, Jacques! Habitus babitus como tibi.*[9]

MAYOR ZELL: What's this mumbo-jumbo? What the hell does he want? I don't understand. ⟨Is there a translator in the house?⟩ Is that Latin? Doesn't he speak French?

[*With accompanying gestures*] ⟨*Parlez-vous Breton?* Limousines? *Pathelin?*⟩

I must admit, I'm at a loss here.

THE PILGRIM: *Orlando Orphurio-sophisto et fraternitas garçons! Supplicare, supplicare filles-de-joie-os et mortuos.*[10]

MAYOR ZELL: Is he trying to make his will? Ask him, Colin. Does he *habeas corpus*? Don't you remember any of your Latin? What the hell was all that schooling for anyway? ⟨Almost a whole year's worth!⟩ ["I, so-and-so

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of such-and-such, declare this to be my Last Will and Testament, and, revoking any and all wills and codicils, I . . .".]

THE PILGRIM: *Anal nathrach, orthbhais bethud, dochyel, oy veh!* [*In dee rect-ah, ee, eh, oh, oo, uh-oh!*][11]

MAYOR ZELL: Didn't he have anything in his purse when you first captured him? You were brave, of course, and clever—nice catch, son, *noblesse oblige*—but there's something off here.

COLIN: ⟨How many times I gotta tell you, Pop?⟩ I snatched him up while he was sleeping. ⟨Otherwise, there was gonna be trouble—legal trouble—⟩ and I never woulda pulled it off.

THE PILGRIM: [*He pulls out some papers from his coat and motions for Colin to take them.*] *Whoa, mein Gott in Himmel! Boinks! Boinks! Platz!*[12]

MAYOR ZELL: Wait. Is that a letter he's trying to show us? Give it here, Colin. Show me, son.

[Colin hands it over for his father's inspection.]

I do believe that—. This is in Latin. What is this bull? *Uni . . . Uni . . . universis . . .* The writing's so small, I can barely make it out. *Inspec . . . inspec . . . inspecturis . . .*

COLIN: *Inspecturis Clousseau*?

MAYOR ZELL: By George, I think you've got it! Mary, Mother of—! No wonder I was so confused! I was holding it upside down!

⟨Now, my Latin's a little rusty, I'll grant you. And my eyes aren't what they used to be either. Not for a while now. But seriously, folks:

Have you ever seen anything so poorly written? I swear! ⟨Already the spelling's no bargain; but—.⟩ Would you just look at this chicken scratch! *This* is what passes for handwriting these days? Notaries, folks! What are you gonna do? And scribes! [Can't live with 'em, can't read without 'em!]

Let's see, now: "To Whom it May Concern. . . ." Aha! I do believe, son, that this letter says he's on pilgrimage.

⟨Could this possibly be . . . ? He's not a pilgrim, is he?⟩

THE PILGRIM: *Und ouel, ouel,* well! *Oc, oc,* okay, yes! [And, hey! Happy Thanksgiving!][13]

MAYOR ZELL: I knew it, I swear! I had a hunch he was a pilgrim. You can tell from the Latin.

But, son: to hell with this booty of yours! This boy ain't worth a dime! Now, if he'd been a Saracen or something—⟨or maybe some minor-league religious player or⟩—hell!—even your run-of-the-mill Franciscan, that would've been a horse of a different color. He could have fetched over six thousand bucks. Or we could at least have gotten some nice gray wool off him: enough for some new clothes for your mother and me.

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⟨But ransom? For *him*? You're not even going to get a reward! If you were hoping to recoup your losses from the war, you'd best look elsewhere. This character here, he's just a pilgrim seeking safe passage. We have to set him free. Now, just untie him and be quick about it!⟩

We must have been out of our minds. Some brave exploit you pulled off there, kid. Not exactly the stuff of epic poetry, you know. ⟨Hurry up, I said: untie him.⟩

[Colin unties the Pilgrim.]

And I've got to get back to my docket. I've got things to do and cases to hear.

[Instead of leaving, father and son continue to puzzle over the letter.]

THE PILGRIM: [*Aside*] *¡Ándale, ándale! consigliere, Pathelino, reductio ad abswordum! Revenons—oui, oui, oui!—revenons, non, non, non—revenons, folks, à nos moutons!*© *Ciao!*[14]

[Exit the Pilgrim, as fast as he can.]

MAYOR ZELL: According to this letter—see? right here!—he's a regular Joan of Arc ⟨off to . . . Saint John's . . . Saint John's Wort? Saint John's *Wood* . . . I got it! Saint J*ohn*son's Wood! Out by Saint Tomcat-in-Tails!⟩ Or could it be . . . ? By George, it's Saint *Kat*'s of *Proud*wood, him and that proud wood of his!

[{*To the audience*} What do you want, folks? Canterbury? This isn't bloody Chaucer!]

See here, Colin? It says so right here.

COLIN: No, Pop, where's your sense of the craft? Don't you get it? It says "Our Lady of . . ."—*ta-da-da! da-da-da-da-da-da!*©—"the Trumpet Mushrooms!"; and I do believe that's where he's headed. ⟨And then, who knows? On to Lourdes?⟩ It's all right here in the letter, Pop. There's, like, a whole song and dance about it.

MAYOR ZELL: ⟨Who cares? He can go wherever the hell he wants!⟩ In the name of the Father, the Son, and Saint Peter, ⟨it's just as I suspected.⟩ That crap Latinizing was a dead giveaway. Probably some ignorant parish priest again, just sticking it in willy-nilly, as usual. I just hadn't yet fully . . . *decipherized*.

COLIN: To tell you the truth, Pop, when I first laid eyes on him, I thought he was from Turkey, on accounta he was so tall and shit. I mean, look at that face!

[Father and son suddenly realize that the Pilgrim is gone.]

MAYOR ZELL: [And the truth shall set us free! Young Turks these days, folks! What are you gonna do?]

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But just drop it for now, son. I must return to the business at hand.

Wait! What did I do with my escritoire? It's time to get all this on the record.

[{*To the audience*} What? You think I have a court recorder?]

The full account, son: memorialized in writing. For the case books. Starting with the boots and the hose.

[He begins to write as Colin looks over his shoulder.]

Now . . . how do you spell *houseaulx*?

[**COLIN:** *Óuzo*, Pop? Is this any time for an aperitif? Besides, we're French. I'll have a Pernod! Or a *grand* Guignolet.

MAYOR ZELL: No: *houseaulx*. You've got the *emphásis* on the wrong *sylláble*. *Répétez! Ou-zó*. Your big boots. *Houseaulx!*

COLIN: Oh, *ouzó!* Hey, Pop! *Oo's* on first?

MAYOR ZELL: *Oo?*

COLIN: *Houseaulx*! {*He studies what his father has written.*}

Whoa, Pop, you're way off there! You got the ending all wrong. Over here. Okay, we'll spell it together. Where there's a will and a "whoa"-ho-ho, there's a way:]

Oo, plus . . . . Gimme an *s*, gimme an *e*, gimme an *a*, gimme a—. *U* need a dictionary here or what? Gimme a *hoo-là-là!—seaulx!* There you go! *Houseaulx!*[15] *Jacques-bottes* were made for walkin'!©

MAYOR ZELL: Holy *coquille Saint Jacques*! Right you are, for galoshes' sake! [*He scans the audience as he laughs at his own joke.*] But I still feel like I'm forgetting something. Let's give this place a last once-over, shall we? [Content shifts in flight, you know.]

⟨But, wait! Over there! Headed back this way! It's not that woman again, is it?⟩

[SCENE 5]

GLORIA: What's good for the goose is good for the gander? And *I'm* supposed to just take the loss? The goose *and* the gander? My hen *and* my cock?

So much for the little people, folks. Ripped off and robbed blind of what's rightfully theirs. That's our lot [and it's no Mother Goose rhyme! At this rate,] I might as well just go back to *Monsieur*. [I know!] I'll bring him some apples.

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[SCENE 6]

[GLORIA]: *Monsieur*—Your Honor—⟨I come before you anew in order to—. I've brought you some apples and,⟩ in light of your great respect for all of us here who are subject to your jurisdiction. . . .

For God's sake, man, you're supposed to protect and to serve! ⟨In point of fact, it's your solemn duty to faithfully, fairly, and impartially execute the law and to administer justice, without prejudice or dissimulation. [And without making a damn farce out of the whole thing!]

So, listen! The better to enhance your receptivity toward me and my case, here you go, sir! I've got a little something for you right here. Just wait till you see what's in this basket.⟩

[Zell looks perplexed.]

For my case, for God's sake! [{*Aside to the audience*} And for this basket-case of a trial.]

⟨You've never eaten apples like these before. Here you go, Your Honor. Have a taste.⟩

[{*To the audience*} And how do you like *them* apples?]

MAYOR ZELL: Then, you are summoned to appear forthwith, Madam, under the Tree of Justice, and you shall be heard. I'll make quick work of you.

GLORIA: [*Fumbling with her apron*] And that's not all! ⟨Why, whatever do we have here in my lap?⟩ A little something else I brought you, all *chambré* from my own personal vault. It's a whole quarter-wheel of cheese.

MAYOR ZELL: Sweet. An officer of the court always comes out ahead.

[*Sotto voce*] And, you, son: listen up, Colin, because it's high time we got out of here.

GLORIA: I've got to take my cow out to pasture first, Your Honor, but I'll be right back. You'll definitely find me right where you said: [for whatever you desire under the elms]. At the seat of justice. [*She moves to leave but thinks better of it, electing instead to head to the Tree of Justice.*]

MAYOR ZELL: I must say, Colin, looking back now on all that you've lost, I feel a certain remorse: especially about the—. What the hell did you have to go and lose our mare for anyway? Now I have to walk.

COLIN: What the hell, Pop! You wanna talk loss? Now that I've been to war and back, I ain't never leavin' this town again. Jesus H. Christ, ⟨no way, no how⟩! There's no place like home. [Plus, all this will be mine someday.]

MAYOR ZELL: ⟨Yes, but you must remember, Colin: you're a grown man now. You'll finally have to make something of yourself and, for once, don't get all stubborn on me.⟩ What are you going to do now?

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COLIN: Jumpin' Jehosaphuck, Pop! Get off my case! What do you always gotta be hasslin' me for?

Okay, fine. ⟨If it's so damn *panurgent*:⟩ it just so happens I'm fixin' to get married. ⟨And soon. At least I'll get a few hot meals out of it.⟩

MAYOR ZELL: Married? So, who's the lucky girl?

COLIN: Who else? Charlie-the-Chaplain's daughter. And I'm gonna be her husband, damnit! ⟨That's who I want and, if you must know,⟩ I already talked to her about it one time and she kinda said yes: when we was shellin' peas over at cousin Peter Piggly-Wiggly's.[16]

MAYOR ZELL: She's a pretty enough gal, if it weren't for that bum leg.

COLIN: Who cares? ⟨I'll take her like she comes. She's my girl and that's that.⟩ Besides, she got a great personality.

MAYOR ZELL: ⟨You like her, son, I understand, and that's no small thing; but I strongly advise that we postpone this discussion until later.⟩ [{*Sotto voce*} And the entire matter of the estate too.] Just forget about all this for now, son. Docket calls! I've [got places to go,] cases to hear, and better things to do.

[He sees that Gloria is fast approaching the Tree.]

⟨On second thought: it's the cases I'd prefer to postpone insofar as—. Once we're back in session, that woman's not giving up and she's sure to prevail. It's not going to go your way, son, because let's face it: you did it! Which is why it's best that I refrain from further hearings today. That said, Colin, my boy:

As befits a good Christian, you'll just have to find some way to calm her down. And, if you don't mind my saying so . . . ©

[*To the audience*] You too, gents! And don't you be thinking so much about everything *we* did wrong that you forget about what all of *you* did wrong. Let he who is without sin cast the first groan.⟩

[*To Colin*] Are you coming or what? Let's go!

COLIN: I'll be along in just a bit.

MAYOR ZELL: [*To the audience as he asks for financial contributions*] Come on, move it! Move it, I said!

My docket calls, I've gotta go!
We hope that you enjoyed the show.

[Avoiding the Tree of Justice, he exits, possibly to the sounds of closing music.[17]*]*

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Here ends the *Farce of Thévot and His Son, Colin*, published for the first time in Lyon at the Press of the late Barnabé Chaussard near Our Lady of Solace.

20 June 1542.

NOTES

1. These are also the names of Colin's comrades in arms (2: 390; below, note 5). Since men in the military went by the names of either their home towns or their masters, it is unclear whether "Vicestre" and "Grenelle" are of higher or lower social standing (*RF*, 5: 196n; *SFQS*, note 12; *RFlorence*, 99n). Other locales include *Firlibois* (for Fierbois), Sainct Jean au bois, Sainct Marcou près Briaire, Sainct Crespais d'Orillac, and Nostre-Dame de Cleron (2: 402; *RF*, 5: 219n–20n). For the historical setting, see *SFQS*, Préf.

2. In the *RBM* cast list, he is technically "Le Mere." I cannot help but recall the hellfire and brimstone "bravery" of Zell Miller at the 2004 Republican convention: https://www.c-span.org/video/?27051–1/governor-zell-miller-1992-democratic-national-convention-keynote-speech (accessed 30 August 2020).

3. For a feminist perspective on clothing, see Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed*. Otherwise, for footwear, see, e.g., http://www.personal.utulsa.edu/~marc-carlson/shoe/RESEARCH/GLOSSARY/define.htm (accessed 22 March 2021); and, among several extremely helpful resources for medieval clothing and weaponry: https://www.medievalwarfare.info/glossary.htm and https://www.themorgan.org/collection/Illuminating-Fashion/glossary (both accessed 22 March 2021). You can see more free archers here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Franc-archer,_archer_de_la_garde_-_1460_(NYPL_b14896507–1235316).tiff and here: https://sottiesetfarces.wordpress.com/2019/07/04/les-frans-archiers-qui-vont-a-naples/

4. For obvious reasons, one might try "To Be a Pilgrim."© You can see one with armor here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pilgrim_Armour.jpg (accessed 13 February 2022).

5. Here are Bicêtre and Grenelle. The former sounds "bisexual" but is normally "Winchester"; the latter evokes the "Garanella plain" from the Battle of Lutetia in 52 BCE, whence, my choices.

6. *ATF*, 2: 393; but the Rousset version specifies *ton jacques dessus ton pourpoinct* (30). Forgive me for using the *PourPoint* presentation joke again from *Who's Your Daddy* (#5); but it does tend to land.

7. Colin's tales from the so-called front, rife with such onomatopoeia as *drain*, *drain*, *drain*, are reminiscent of the heavenly warfare of *Johnny Slack-Jaw* (*ID*, #9; *RBM*, #24), here etymologically related to *dedans or devant la place* (2: 395). For Tissier, Colin bolts *before* they get into town proper (*RF*, 5: 204n); for Koopmans, *la place* is the *place forte* (*RFlorence*, 100n); and Martin recalls that war horses wore bells so they could be more easily found after battle (*SFQS*, note 31). Personally, I hear the "Fanfare for Twentieth-Century Fox."©

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8. In addition to Gloria's reprise of Thévot's earlier *rebelle* (2: 391), this is, juridically speaking, one of the richer speeches, with some explicit mockery of Gloria's lexicon: *Se vous n'en faictes autre chose / De ma cause, je m'y oppose. / Fornicallement j'en appelle; / Aussi fault que je me rebelle. / Je mettray alligation. / Sans vostre jurisdiction, / Et m'en croyray aux accidens* (*ATF*, 2: 397; see also *RC*, *vv.* 183–89). In Rousset, the final line reads *Tant au principal qu'incidens* (35). For Martin, Gloria is also savvy enough to wish to pad a complaint for damages (*SFQS*, note 36) or to respond to a solicitation of a bribe (*RF*, 5: 222n).

9. In notes 9–14, I've reproduced all of the Pilgrim's gibberish, which can profitably be compared with sc. 5 of the *Pathelin* (*ATF*, 2: 399–401; *RC*, vv. 244–92; Rousset, 38–41). Unless there are significant variations, I reproduce only the *RBM/ATF* text, starting here: *Got fadracot garare vestud my, / Touffe dulain mistrande*. See the excellent annotations in *RF*, 5: 214–19; *FFMA*, 2: 155–56; *SFQS*, notes 62–73; and *RFlorence*, 103–03.

10. For this speech, we have three different versions: *O fillos aes d'implorare, / Filos meretre salment* (2: 399–400); or *Ophilos ars d'implorance / Filos meretrefalement* (*RC,* vv. 250–51); and, for Rousset, it's just *O fillos, fillos d'implorance* (38). See also *SFQS*, note 65; RF, 215n; *RFlorence*, 103n.

11. *Sardore, sore, basterolle, / Hohart zohart belle fredrac* (2: 400). I'm with Cohen in hearing something Kabbalistic (*RC*, 41n), to which I've added Merlin's chant of making from Boorman's 1981 film, *Excalibur*. I've also picked up on the preceding legalese of *cujus casus* (2: 400), the first syllable of which the audience would have heard as *cul* (asshole).

12. *Aon mac god tu te rivé / Tison grac errac rencontre* (2: 400); or *Haon mar god toul te rivé / Zizon grac errac rencontre* (*RC*, vv. 264–65); or *Haon, mar, god, mistri, namboust / Tizon, graccrac, bourlirancontre* (Rousset, 39).

13. What is the meaning of the mysterious *Ouel, ouel* (2: 401)? As I hypothesized in *Birdbrain* for *anno*! (*FF*, 461n463), I do believe that the Pilgrim is speaking a few words of English! I'm inspired here by Samuel Stern's stunning discovery that the poetic *kharjas* of the medieval Hispano-Arabic *muwashshahs* were not in Arabic but in Old Provençal. For the stalwart seeking to learn what in the world I'm talking about, see Menocal on Stern's "Les vers finaux" in *Arabic Role*, 83–85.

14. *Queste hore commil consere, / Hort hort myne copue gigois* (2: 401); or *Qu'esse ce or comme il coserre. / Hort, hort mine coque gigois* (*RC*, vv. 291–92). Martin is surely right to hear a variation on *coque cigrue* (*SFQS*, note 73), a mythical creature also seen in *The Pardoners' Tales* (*ID*, 262) and one that signifies complete absurdity.

15. Similar to a gag in *Pernet qui va à l'école* (*RBM*, #46), projected for a future volume as *Alphabet Soup*, this gag revolves around how to spell *houseaulx* (galoshes). Colin spells it out phonetically, which leads to various double entendres: *Comment espeleray-je houseaulx?* To which Colin answers: *Housiaulx, [s, i, a, u, x], i.e., siaulx* (2: 402; see also *RF*, 5: 22n). It sounds as if he means to begin his sentence with *Et s'il y a hue.* And you've got to love the unstable orthography during a spelling bee (which I've made a tad more consistent).

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16. A tip of the hat at 2: 404 to the real-life *farceur*, Gautier Garguille (1573–1633), for whom I've substituted a more recognizably iconic postmedieval figure. See *RF*, 5: 225–26n.

17. Compare the two endings: *Il faut aller noz plaitz tenir / Adieu jusques au revenir* (2: 405) vs. the sudden moralizing in Rousset: *Parquoy mieux vaut, Colin mon fils, / Que m'en abstienne pour ce jour, / Cependant faudra par amour / Faire en sorte qu'elle s'appaise, / Adieu Messieurs, ne vous desplaise, / Et ne pensez tant à nos fautes / Que vous en oubliez les vostres* (45). For music, try: "Istanbul, not Constantinople"© or "I Ain't Gonna Study War No More!"©

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9.

Okay, Cupid

[Le Procès d'un jeun moyne et d'un viel gendarme]

CAST OF CHARACTERS

CUPID (Cupido)
[LOLA,] the GIRL (La Fille)
The MONK (Le Moyne)
and the SOLDIER (Le Gendarme)
[The Scribe, a follower of Cupid]
[A small band of Minstrels]

PRODUCTION NOTES

Of two anonymous, late-fifteenth-century versions of this trial before Judge Cupid, I follow primarily that of the Picard-inflected *Recueil Trepperel* (#29), first edited by Droz in *RTLF*, 41–54: the *Procès d'un jeune moyne et d'un viel gendarme qui plaident pour une fille devant Cupido, le dieu d'amours* (41–54). Available online courtesy of the Bibliothèque Nationale at https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8626304n#, it was subsequently reedited by Martin in *SFQS*: (https://sottiesetfarces.wordpress.com/2017/06/15/ung-jeune-moyne-et-ung-viel-gendarme/). The other version—springing from a common source (*Répertoire*, 220n) but comprised of 390 verses to the *RT*'s 468—is the final play of Rousset (#7): the *Farce nouvelle contenant le débat d'un jeune moine & d'un vieil gen darme, pardevant le Dieu Cupidon, pour une fille, Fort plaisante & recreative* (121–44). Rousset's Cupid play was reedited by both Caron in the unpaginated *Collection* (vol. 1) and by Brunet in *RPF* (1: 121–44), the latter of which bears our Figure 5 after p. 136.[1] While the Rousset version was published later, it might in fact constitute an earlier telling of the story (*RTLF*, 42–43). In light of the many intriguing differences, I've produced another composite edition. Once again, I mark with angle brackets such significant variations from Rousset as his reassignment of some of the female protagonist's obscenities to the Monk [e.g., *RTLF*, 299–323 vs. Rousset, 136–

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Figure 5. Cupid holding court in an illustration from Brunet, *Recueil de plusieurs farces*, after p. 136.

37]); minor variations are introduced silently. Summaries of the plot may be found in Petit de Julleville (*RTC*, 132) and in Faivre (*Répertoire*, 220–21); but our farce has never been translated into English or, to my knowledge, any other modern vernacular. Bonnie Blackburn, however, translated a lengthy excerpt in her "Lascivious Career of B-Flat" (39–41), a brilliant take on this farcical "Love Court" (*Cour d'Amours*) in which music is key (below, note 10).

Make way, then, for an unnamed *bourgeoise* (*RTLF*, v. 47; Rousset, 124), here "Lola," who is of legal age to marry but uncertain as to what manner of man best suits her legal and sexual needs (*apoinctement* again, as in #1, *Not Gettin' Any*). Devoid of prospects, she is on the verge of giving in to the sin of despair (*desesperance*), the primary cause of suicide in the Middle Ages (Murray *Suicide*, 2: 369–95), when. . . .[2] Enter Cupid with a Hobson's choice akin to that of *Husband Swap* (*HD*, #10). What will it be for our Bachelorette? A horny young Monk—probably a Franciscan—to service her (Le Moine)?

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Or a washed-up old Soldier to press her into service on the front lines (Le Gendarme)?

If *American Idol* and its descendants have taught us anything, it's the importance of song choice. This is a play about making beautiful music together. Measure for measure, legal and musical registers blend as we keep score of notation and denotation (*noter*, *denoter*), ordinary and extraordinary "measures" (*procès ordinaire*, *provision soudaine*), delays and rests (*dilation*), expeditiousness and tempo (*expedicion*), continuances and drones (*huyttaine*, *ad octo probandum*), and full-throated warbling vs. a clear/clerical voice (*gringoter*, *voye clere*). Simply put, *Okay, Cupid* is a musical master class, an extended *jeu parti* or debate poem (like *Match, Point, Counterpoint* [*HD*, #6]), and a worthy successor to Hrotsvitha's quadrivium-inspired music lesson from the tenth-century convent drama, *Paphnutius* (Wilson, 93–101). It even steers us directly toward Cambrai (*RTLF*, v. 261), the musical capital of the fifteenth-century French world, which produced such distinguished composers of the so-called Burgundian school as Guillaume Dufay (Figure 6, left) and his student, Johannes van Ockeghem. We find, moreover, not one but three specific callouts to a popular polyphonic song of the day, also featured in *Les Botines Gaultier* (*RC*, #9), which was to be spoken or sung (below, note 10): "*J'ay prins amours à ma devise*" or "I've taken love as my motto" (*RTLF*, *after* vv. 272; 275; 284; Rousset, 136). Signaled by Brown (*MFST*, 101–2), the song survives in multiple manuscripts, among them, the magnificent heart-shaped *Chansonnier de Jean de Montchenu* (Figure 7).[3] For "*J'ay prins amours*," any number of postmedieval equivalents might be imagined; but, ideally, *deux motz à la nouvelle guise* would be something "on the charts" (*RTLF*, v. 266; 272; Rousset, [135]). Although no translation of a song's sociohistorical moment can age properly (above, "A Special Note"), suffice it to say that any contemporary musical choice needn't be particularly elegant.

Okay, Cupid goes on to strike all the right notes, starting with its major—and minor—punning on key signatures, which is, literally, no "accident": the musicological symbol for flats, sharps, and naturals is called an "accidental" (*bemol* and *becare* at vv. 230–32). Meanwhile, Martin is good enough to remind us that, in Normandy, *bemol* would have been pronounced like *bois mol* or a man's "soft wood" and, *becare,* like *bois quarre* or "hard wood" (*SFQS*, notes 75, 76). The latter quality is applicable to the Monk, a "piece-of-ass" who is, handily, a *monachus* or *moine à cul* (*RTLF*, v. 443; Rousset, 142; *SFQS*, note 138). There's also the *plainchant* that suggests a song and dance on a woman's field (*chant*/*champs*), and the *uniçum* or *unisson* that Martin hears as *uni-con* or "smooth vulva" (*SFQS*, note 88). Don't get me started on what a ball can be had with *solmizing* or *solmization*, namely, singing the musical scales as

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Figure 6. Guillaume Dufay (left) and Gilles Binchois (right). Martin le Franc, "Champion des Dames," Arras, 1451. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Guillaume_Dufay_and_Gilles_Binchois,_ca_1400_(21955956385).jpg

do, *re*, *mi*, and then some (as for Leofranc Holford-Strevens in the "do it to me" of "*Fa mi la mi so la*"). Nor need Lola take a back seat during the musical proceedings. She can be as canny as the Lady director of *At Cross Purposes* (*FF*, #7) or as show-stopping as Adelaide from *Guys and Dolls*. Plus, to my ear, Cupid himself ought to get into the act when, in his opening proclamation, he encourages audience participation. For his special spin on the Basochiens' trademark *cry* (*TB*, 197–201; Fabre, *Les Clercs*), imagine that he chants "Order! Order!" à la John Bercow, the former Speaker of the British House of Commons.[4] Or, as in the 1980s Broadway musical, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, have Cupid later invite the spectators to cast their votes for the trial's victor or for which suitor gets to perform a final love duet with Lola.

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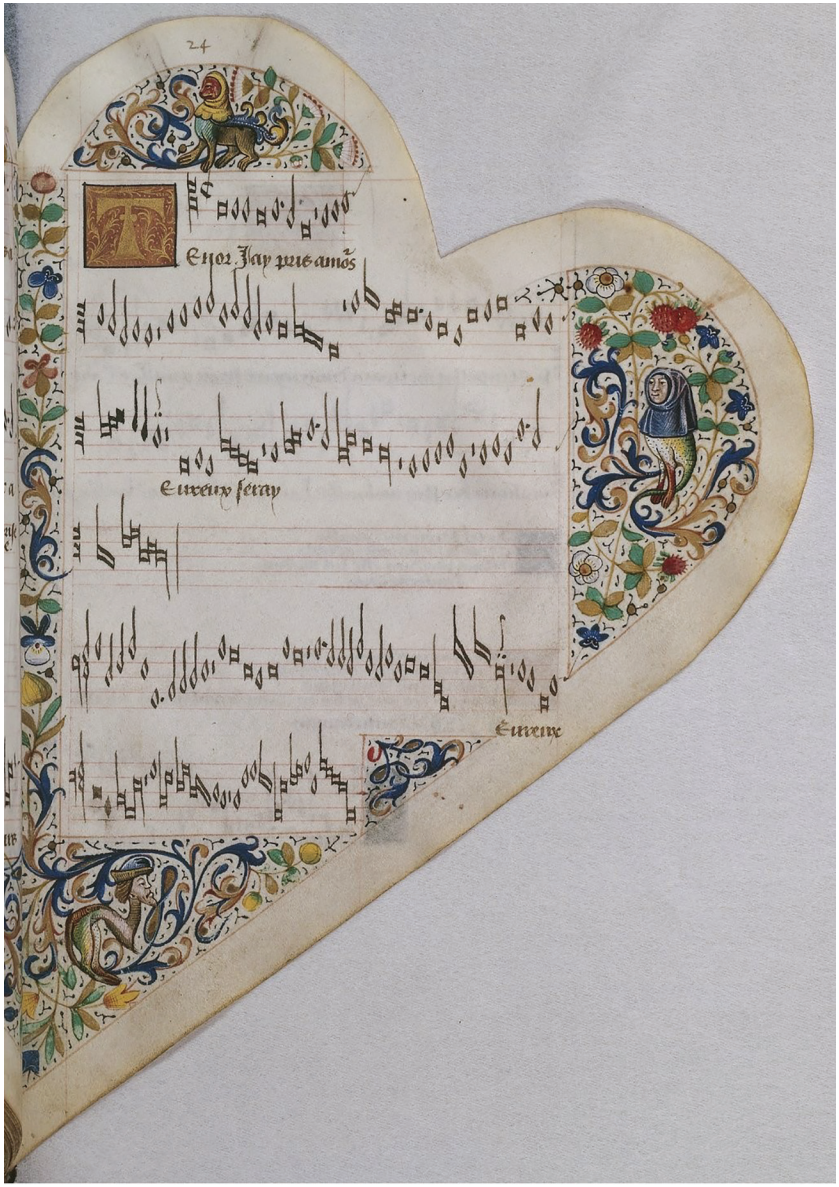

Figure 7. *"J'ay prins amour."* From the *Chansonnier cordiforme de Montchenu.* Bibliothèque nationale. Public domain https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b525044884.r=Chansonnier%20cordiforme%20de%20Montchenu.?rk=21459;2

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What's the verdict? Who will play *mignon* to Lola's *mignonne*? The Gendarme with his archaic language, groanworthy puns, and antiquated melodies? Or the Monk, a self-proclaimed "organ man"? Hint: over the course of a musical *pas de deux*, Lola will sound more and more like the winner-to-be. So, just sit back and enjoy, per one of the play's preferred lexicons, the horse race and the ride. And follow the bouncing ball as the candidates' *testimony* (*testes*, *testis*) climaxes in a *Deo gratias* that morphs into *Grates vobis, grates vobis*, conveniently heard as *grattez vos bis* or "scratch your dicks!" (*SFQS*, note 14). For my own part, I'll merely ask that you prick up your ears.

Sets, Costumes, or Props

For the showstopping song and dance routines, musical paraphernalia is de rigueur: instruments, staffs, scores, lecterns, metronomes, and the like. And, at the round table of Cupid's makeshift court, give the God of Love a conductor's baton instead of, or in addition to, a gavel.

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"Bali Hai." By Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II. ASCAP Work ID: 320010779.

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"Here, There, and Everywhere." By John Lennon and Paul McCartney. ASCAP Work ID: 380119308.

"Hard-Knock Life." By Martin Charnin and Charles Strouse. ASCAP Work ID: 380189662. See also Music Theatre International. https://www.mtishows.com/annie

"The Game of Love." By Clint Ballard. ASCAP Work ID: 370078158.

"Come See About Me." By Lamont Dozier, Brian Holland, and Eddie Holland. BMI Work #232132.

"Fly Me to the Moon." By Bart Howard. ASCAP Work ID: 360072940.

"A Man Needs a Maid." By Neil Young. ASCAP Work ID: 430206627.

"We Are Family." By Bernard Edwards and Nile Rodgers. BMI Work #1612850.

"Anything You Can Do." By Irving Berlin. ASCAP Work ID: 310056043.

"Whatever Lola Wants." By Richard Adler and Jerry Ross. ASCAP Work ID: 530045862.

"76 Trombones." By Meredith Willson. ASCAP Work ID: 490040443.

"Crazy on You." By Ann Wilson, Nancy Wilson [Heart,] and Roger Fisher. ASCAP Work ID: 330221666.

"I Live for Your Love." By Pamela Rewsick, Richard Waggoner, and Stephen Werfel. BMI Work #634966.

"Shop Around." By Berry Gordy and Smokey Robinson. ASCAP Work ID: 490363247.

"We Go Together." By Warren Casey and Jim Jacobs. ASCAP Work ID 530175918.

"Good Old-Fashioned Lover Boy." By Freddie Mercury. BMI Work #495994.

"We're Off to See the Wizard." By Harold Arlen and E. Y. Harburg. ASCAP Work ID: 530031555.

"Mighty-Mouse Theme Song." By Marshall Barer and Philip Scheib. BMI Work #990567.

"Old Paint." Traditional.

"It Ain't the Meat, It's the Motion." By Henry Glover and Sydney Nathan. BMI Work #735013.

"Dancing in the Dark." By Bruce Springsteen. Administered by Universal Music Group: https://www.universalmusic.com

"High Noon." ["Do Not Forsake Me."] By Dmitri Tiomkin and Ned Washington. ASCAP Work ID: 895496601.

"I Whistle a Happy Tune." By Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II. ASCAP Work ID: 390083480.

"Treat Her Right." By Roy Head and Gene Kurtz. BMI Work #1542510.

"Lola." By Ray Davies. BMI Work #890725.

"*Ich bin die fesche Lola*." ["Naughty Lola."] By Friedrich Hollaender, Robert Liebmann, and Richard Rillo. ASCAP Work ID: 390089304.

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"Down in MacConnachy Square." By Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe. Music Theatre International. https://www.mtishows.com/brigadoon-0

"Girls Just Want to Have Fun." By Victor Carstarphen, Robert Hazard, Cyndi Lauper, Gene McFadden, Richard David Morel, and John Cavadus Whitehead. ASCAP Work ID: 372137750.

"Just What I Needed." By Rick Otcasek [Ocasek].[5]

"Ain't Too Proud to Beg." By Eddie Holland and Norman Whitfield. BMI Work #15614.

"Hot Stuff." By Peter Bellotte and Harold Faltermeier. BMI Work #587659.

"Hold Your Head Up." By Rod Argent and Chris White. BMI Work #575834.

"I Can See Clearly Now." By Johnny Nash. ASCAP Work ID: 390255937.

[SCENE 1]

[Lola might perform an opening number before the set is revealed.[6] *Near the gates of the city and a neighboring public square, Cupid is seated on his throne, in close proximity to a large tree with an enormous round table underneath. He calls his court to order.]*

CUPID: Hear ye, hear ye, all you loyal lovers out there, my servants, my subjects! Hear ye! Hear ye! Let it be known unto all that, by the power vested in me by the royal decree ⟨of His Majesty, this court is now in session!⟩ Let all who are aggrieved come forward and be heard in this, my jurisdiction, my venue, my Superior Court, my Supreme Court. Come forward before Judge Cupid, without prejudice or fear of reprisal.

Come with rings on your fingers©—signet rings, [class rings]—any ring to make your mark, I insist.

Come with codpiece in place and with all your jewels too—rubies, sapphires, diamonds, turquoise—or forever hold your piece.

Come ⟨singing and dancing and crooning the latest tunes.⟩ And bring your minstrels too! [Make a joyful noise unto the law!] Let those melodies ring out, that you too may show yourselves to be ⟨jubilant,⟩ joyous, and jocular!

Come one, come all!

Come, ye Burgundians and Flemings!

Come, ye, regardless of sect or sex [or race or class] or gender!

[Come, ye] from every corner—[and closet]—of the earth!

Come, ye Picards, Bretons, and Normans!

⟨Come, ye Artesians, Brabantians, and Germans, to wit:

[Come] any and all of ye cited above, in whom my power and glory reverberate throughout the land!⟩

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Come, ye: all who live for love!

Come, ye whose cups runneth over with honor!

Come, ye, without delay!

Come one, come all, come to me,© for court is now in session, [the Honorable Cupid presiding,] over these, our very own *nights* of the round table!

[Come one, come all! It's a moveable feast!] Let us eat, drink, and be merry![7]

[Lights up on Lola.]

[LOLA,] THE GIRL: I am so done with bein' all by myself.© Don't even have a boyfriend—⟨one has yet be provided⟩—so, as far as I can tell, I've got nothing to look forward to either and no good days to come. I'm just biding my time here: wasting my whole youth away trying to keep up the building and grounds!

[*She vogues.*] A mighty fortress is this girl? *Not.* ⟨Ladies and gentlemen, it's enough to make you moan, and not in a good way.⟩ It's as if this whole body of mine—all fresh and soft and silky—is meant to be deprived of all earthly delights. At this rate, by the time dirty, filthy old age has staked its claim and dispossessed me of all the worldly goods with which it did *me* endow, I'll be such an old bat and in such miserable shape that nobody'll even give me a second look.

Okay, fine! If that's the way it's gonna be after all this upkeep; and—[*displaying her cleavage*]—if everything's gonna fall down anyway, I might as well give in to *dis pair* and just go for it! Fallen *shmallen*! If I'm goin' down, I'm goin' all the way down while I still got a reputation to lose! Better I should die a shameful death than—. Unless . . . .

What about Cupid, the God of Love? Maybe I can still count on him? He always takes up the cause of true lovers. One way or another, he's bound to help me out, right? And then, things could really turn around for me. If I could just get my fair share of even *some* of my due. . . . ⟨You could even go so far as to say that, but for the aid and comfort I'm fixin' to get off Cupid, the all-great, the all-powerful, I do believe I would have lost all hope a long time ago.

But, wait! Isn't that him over there on his throne? I'll just mosey on over and see if he's willing to hear my case and help me out:⟩ apportion me a little something. ⟨Binding arbitration and such. Sweet.⟩

Good day, Milord Cupid. May God be with you, Your Honor.

CUPID: And also with you, pretty lady. What can I do you for?

LOLA: I call upon you, sire, in this, my hour of need. Great need.

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CUPID: To ask?

LOLA: For my fair share of love. What else? I need it bad.

CUPID: On the face of it, you're of an age to be doing it: clean, pretty, well-rounded, supple, ⟨comely, as it were⟩. Cute and ready for use. *Prête à porter.* You're not even a minor, so it seems. Plus, you strike me as rather clever, thoughtful, and mature. For a girl.⟩

But tell me: You're not married already?

LOLA: Nope. Not yet. And I'm really bummed out about it too.

CUPID: Then, I'll marry you off, little lady, because—. [*Double-checking*] You really, truly *are* old enough, yes? And classy enough?

But, just so you know: married love isn't necessarily the best kind of loving. Could be it's not quite what you're after.

LOLA: Which is precisely why I'm here. ⟨I just want to be happy.⟩ That's my intention anyway. One of many: to take a lover. Or at least get myself a boyfriend.

CUPID: If you wanted just any husband, ⟨we could always fix you up with some old fat guy. Nothing to it! Just say the word and he's yours. But beware! There's risk and peril involved.⟩ A woman doesn't necessarily know what she's in for; so, I'm going to tell you all about it right now.

⟨What joy there is in marriage is as fleeting as⟩ the dew in Aprille that falleth on the grass.© [*Lola looks perplexed.*] Like the morning dew that disappears at sunrise. [Bloom's off that rose in no time.]

LOLA: How's that now?

CUPID: Love fades, and sooner than you think: *all* love, as soon as penury rears its ugly head. Besides, once you set up housekeeping. . . . ⟨What you really need to know is this:

At first, marriage is all fun and games. It's [hearts and flowers] and passion, but only at the beginning. Little by little, it all goes away till, in the end, you're left bored and angry. And, furthermore: by that time, you've probably got mouths to feed. So, game over! Even when you're well-off with a whole household full of servants!⟩ The most beautiful and serviceable of girls winds up stuck playing nursemaid to . . . you know. And, then, from one day to the next, she's an old hag!

[Ready for use, was it? Sure! For now.] But just wait for the dirty sheets on the bed all the time and the working your fingers to the bone. That's what marriage is really all about and, ⟨from that day forward,⟩ [in sickness and in health,] for as long as you both shall live, it's where pleasure goes to die. That's the risk I was talking about. So, look before you leap, honey, ⟨because, once you're in it, that's it. There's no getting out.⟩

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LOLA: ⟨To hear you tell it—.⟩ [Wait. *Penury?*]

Very well, then. In light of the foregoing, no thanks. That kind of love ain't worth a hill o' beans.

CUPID: If, however, it's lovin' you're after, then get yourself a paramour, my beauty, and you'll have all you need. You'll be all dressed up and ready to go! A fashion plate from head to toe. *Juste comme il fault.* Top to bottom. Always. And, if he should ever go off half-cocked and utter so much as a single word against you, it's bye-bye, baby![©] You are outta there. So long, pal, and see you around! It's put out or get out. And it's not like he can do a thing to stop you: not without your express consent. But wait, there's more:

As far as the requisite love-service is concerned—the "making the beast with two backs," if you will—you'll be very well serviced indeed. Regularly. Come rain or come shine.[©]

LOLA: Okay, Cupid! That's what I want![©][8]

CUPID: You'll go to parties and dances and festivals: strutting your stuff, running, leaping, jumping, flying through the air with the greatest of ease![©] And nobody will ⟨dare to⟩ object. ⟨It's your way or the highway, baby. As you like it. [Your very own terms of endearment.]⟩

LOLA: Lord have mercy, ⟨okay, Cupid! How convenient!⟩ That's what I want![©] It's just the thingy.

CUPID: But, if you're married, ⟨better watch your back because,⟩ that's right! Housekeeping again! You'll need cradles and swaddling clothes and baby blankets and piles and piles of diapers. . . . There's no end to the suffering! And ain't *that* a shame![©] Pathetic.

LOLA: ⟨Got it.⟩ I'd much rather something else. By a long shot. A different kind of lover-boy. ⟨I don't want some washed up pussy of a husband! No way!⟩ I'd rather have me a boyfriend. Now, there's a horse of a different color! Rub-a-dub-dub, galloping through the bush! You feel me?

CUPID: Shut up! Girlfriend, I've got two in mind for you.

One is a monk—Augustinian, Carmelite, Jacobin, [*Dominique*, *nique*, *nique*,[©] whoever. Long as we stay away from the Franciscans, right?]

The other one's a military man, a *gendarme*. Seems to me, either one of them will do the trick. You'll have a look, compare them side by side, and, then, you'll choose.

[He taps his baton impatiently, annoyed that the actor playing the Monk has missed his cue.]

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[SCENE 2]

[Enter the Monk, who might perform a musical number, during which the impatient Cupid continues to tap his baton.[9]*]*

THE MONK *speaks*: Poor, poor pitiful monks!© All cloistered up and out of sight. ⟨Here, there, and everywhere!©⟩ But is that any reason they should be ⟨totally⟩ excluded from all earthly delights, as provided by Mother Nature? ⟨Deprived of the company of women like outcasts and criminals? It's a hard-knock life for us;© so,⟩ by God, I'll give Cupid a try! ⟨I'll see if the God of Love isn't of a mind to bestow upon me what he does upon others. Something fine. My very own dedicated girlfriend!⟩ [I'm off to see him right now]—nothing ventured, nothing gained—and, depending on what's in it for me, I'm ready to serve. I'm all in; and I'm in it to win it.

How do you do, my Lord Cupid, master of all masters: ⟨long life to you, sir; and may the glory of Your Excellency be forever and ever magnified.⟩

Damn, but you're a sight for sore eyes!

CUPID: You too, friend Monk-ey, and just in time. ⟨Welcome. I'm pleased to see you. [*He motions for a bribe.*]

[*To Lola*] And you, my beauty, what do you say?⟩ Did I find you a nice boy here or what? First shot out of the box.

[Enter the Gendarme in great haste.]

THE GENDARME *speaks*: *En garde*, thief, *en garde*, and once more unto the breach! Let the battle begin!

⟨[*To the audience*] What? you never heard a battle cry before?⟩ Greetings, Cupid. May the Lord bless and keep you.

CUPID: Welcome, *Monsieur le Gendarme*, [and thank you for your service]. But wherever have you been? ⟨I'm about to hear your case! I might well have just the thing for you but. . . . [*He motions for another bribe.*] I do believe that would find you beholden.⟩

You've kept us waiting long enough.

THE GENDARME: Sir, yes sir! Ready, aim—. ⟨I'm in it for the long haul.⟩ Just name your game of love.©

If you've got the cue stick, I've got the balls!

CUPID: What is she? Chopped liver? Take a look at this pretty girl! She's something, isn't she?

THE GENDARME: Holy moly, saints alive, and shiver me timbers! Yes, indeedy! She's something else.

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CUPID: [And yo-ho-ho! What are you, a pirate?] Now, there's a woman to take on all comers. Jesus H. Christ!

⟨So, what do you think? Does she look like one to shrink from a good fight?⟩ Ten hut! Hoist that flag! It's a lucky man gets to joust with the likes of her! ⟨Unless, of course, as I suspect, you're no longer up to storming the gates.

[THE MONK]: {*To the Gendarme*} Like you've got what it takes. You won't be hoisting a damn thing, believe me.⟩

THE GENDARME: What's Mister Monk doing here? What does *he* want?

CUPID: He's already anted up. He wants his fair share of the kitty.

THE GENDARME: Back to the monastery with you, brother Dick! ⟨Since when do you get to—? What do you want with a woman anyway?⟩ Of all the lowdown, dirty—. Just what are you trying to pull? ⟨Retreat at once, I say, or, I swear, I'll—.⟩ Get lost, I said! What are you waiting for? Beat it!

THE MONK: The hell you say, boy! [My money's good as yours; so,] let's play it as it lays, by God!, and we'll see who comes up short. ⟨I sure as hell won't be leavin' on *your* account. You don't scare me one bit. I'm the one who's gettin' the girl!⟩

THE GENDARME: You'll shut up if you know what's good for you and vacate the premises immediately! *Tout de suite!*

CUPID: Not so fast there, gentlemen, all in good timing, timing, timing! Don't take the law into your own hands: take 'em to—. [Order! Order!] This love-court is now in session!

What do you say, girlfriend? Choose. Who do you want? Which one fits the bill?

LOLA: Sir Cupid, Your Honor . . . . ⟨Jeez, how should I know? It's not like you can tell just by looking at 'em,⟩ I swear! I have no idea which of these gentlemen to take ⟨*or* to leave.⟩ They both look okay to me.

THE GENDARME: You'll be mine, sweetheart. It's a more honorable life. ⟨Plus, I'll treat you square.

THE MONK: [Square is right! No way, José!] I expressly forbid it! She's way better off with me!

CUPID: It's your trial, gents. [{*He bows toward each suitor.*} Brother Monk. José].⟩ Make your cases. It's up to you two to figure out how to split this babe in two. ⟨I don't much care one way or the other who comes out on top.

Go on. Sing out boys!

[Smile, baby.]⟩

THE MONK: But—oh mama!—what about what *she* needs for her pleasure?

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What if *Mademoiselle Chose* here were to need that certain *je ne sais quoi*? She's better off with me, I said! I'm the one oughta be her lord and master.

THE GENDARME: And you, Mr. Monk! You call that honorable? A man of the cloth with a piece of ass on the side? ⟨Since when is it admissible or, for that matter, honorable on your part to be consorting with women? Don't tell me, let me guess: carnal knowledge!⟩ The subject of your latest sermon, I suppose?

THE MONK: ⟨What?⟩ You think because we monks are tonsured and cloistered and what-have-you, that that's any cause to conclude that we're to be denied all earthly pleasures, like we were castrated or something? Where do you get off? ⟨You think that, when they cut the hair off our heads, they chopped off our dicks too?⟩

THE GENDARME: You're wasting your breath. There's no point in debating because I'm getting her out of here right now!

THE MONK: Are not! I swear to God, don't even think about it!

LOLA: For God's sake, Cupid, do something!

Issue an injunction or something! Can't you make a temporary ruling? The last thing I need is a full-blown trial. I request an expedited judgment. Come see about me.©

CUPID: ⟨Order, gentlemen! And calm down. Enough pontificating.⟩

And that goes for you too, dear.

⟨Don't keep her in suspense, now, boys⟩: get on with it. Everybody is waiting. Proceed.

THE GENDARME: Let's go! You're coming with me!

THE MONK: ⟨Is not! No way.⟩ I object! Jeez.

CUPID: [*To the two men*] On what grounds? I'll thank you not to waste the Court's time.

[{*To Lola*} And you, girl: speak now, or forever hold—. *Say* something.]

LOLA: Who, me? Okay, fine. So, here's the thing. [The . . . . *Love* is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to—.] I want me a fine Frenchman is all.

CUPID: A fine upstanding piece of peckerwood, eh? Give it to you easy. ⟨Always standing at attention? Never tires out?⟩

LOLA: Now, there's a way to put it, *n'est-ce pas*? Such wisdom. ⟨Like music to a girl's ears. You got my number, all right.⟩

THE GENDARME: With all my worldly goods, I'd thee endow. My wealth, [my pelf,] my silver, my gold. I'd plight thee my troth: all that I have, all

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that I am. ⟨I'd place myself entirely in your own two hands and make it my mission in life to please you in all things.⟩ Whatever you desire. I'll take you to the highest heights every single day—fly you to the moon©—which, by the way, represents nothing more and nothing less than the Officers' Code. For all of us out there on the front lines, patrolling the borders, our motto is "to protect and to serve." In addition to which, a man needs a maid.© It's only fitting. So, we've got chambermaids out there with us too. All the time. When we're out on maneuvers? ⟨And not one whiff of scandal.⟩

THE MONK: Good God Almighty, on the front lines? *Her?* [You think *that's* the kinda camp she's into?] For God's sake, man—. [Wait. *Pelf?*] Stick 'er in a situation like that and that girl's a goner! ⟨Plus, she won't have a thing to wear.⟩ And her piece won't have one moment's peace either because—incoming! Riding with the regiment, harassed every five minutes, ⟨whisked off into the fields willy-nilly for God knows what. And, then, to top it all off,⟩ sleeping in her clothes. On the ground! On a bed of straw, which, by the way, is ⟨as good as she'd get—Jeez!—and with the stable boys, no less. And the horses! Everybody pickin' a fight all the time.⟩ *Or*:

She could go someplace else, gettin' no trouble at all from us cloistered folk. We live together in peace and harmony ⟨and so would she. With *me*!⟩ No muss, no fuss. ⟨No wear, no tear. *Easy-peasy.* She'd be sittin' pretty too:⟩ livin' her best life. Best to be had in this mortal coil.

THE GENDARME: ⟨And hey, hey, *hay* is for—. Quit horsin' around! Compared to *moi*? I, who call on the ladies daily?⟩ And whose ever-growing reputation always precedes him? And what about me, sir? Am I or am I not more entitled to the company of women than you? ⟨What say you?⟩ Speak up, man. I can't hear you!

LOLA: ⟨Boring!⟩ [Did I or did I not request an expedited hearing?] What do you have to go and make a federal case out of it for? ⟨Can we get a ruling here or what?⟩

Your Honor, please, I'm begging you. Say something, Cupid!

THE MONK: I'm having you.

THE GENDARME: I object! ⟨You're a cloistered monk, for—!⟩ Your kind has withdrawn from the world. You're expressly forbidden and denied the company of women, as well as any and all rights of ownership to boot. Your state precludes it. No women allowed! ⟨Ever.⟩

THE MONK: ⟨Objection! Irrelevant.⟩ And you, [Cupid,] could you please stick to the script?

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Just let me state for the record© that—. Let the trial begin. [And may the best man win!]

CUPID: [So, will it be Tweedledee or Tweedledum?] I'll get to the bottom of this but, first, ⟨before I delve any deeper into my investigation, I say:⟩ you shall sing a song! That's it! A musical number! [She's looking for *pieces*, not quiet.] You'll do a couple of choruses and, then, we'll get back to your case.

I'll hear you.[10]

[**THE GENDARME:** By George, anything you can sing, I can sing better!© Make way for the stylings of—.

THE MONK: I can sing anything better than you!©]

LOLA: Me melody, who harmony?

⟨If you want this little lady singing her hind end off,⟩ gimme somethin' good on top and I'll hit all the right low notes. ⟨*Do, re, mi, fa, sol,* [*la, si . . . duh!*]⟩ And I won't be missing a beat.

[*To the audience*] ⟨"Gendarme George" *di Lasso*es the moon? As if![11] It's not like they can just hum a few bars and *I'll* fake it.⟩ You want to belt something out, folks, you need a strong performer on the descant. Otherwise, you know: the whole thing just kinda falls flat.

THE GENDARME: B-flat. That's my signature. It's the only key I know.

THE MONK: [And that's no *accidental*. Better known as the key of F-you!]

Now, I'm a B-sharp kinda man myself and I know how to handle a staff. What can I say, folks? I'm just naturally *bass*! Especially when there's another real natural down below. [Count on it.]

THE GENDARME: [You're *base*, all right, and way off-base!] Tempo, tempo! I always keep to time—and beautifully, I might add. It's what I do. And I never rush. [*Presto ma non troppo!*]

LOLA: ⟨[*Presto shmesto.*] I won't be singing with nobody who can't carry a tune, and I'm lookin' at you, you old warble-horse! You wanna croon, let's just say it takes a deep throat.⟩ [*Da capo al penis.*] And, if you can't handle your counterpoint up there to my bass, I'm sure as hell not keeping your end up for you! ⟨It's solmizing I want and solmizing I'll get!⟩

THE GENDARME: You've met your musical match now, sweetheart and—. [Wait. *Sodomizing?*] I'll go note for note with you any time: again, beautifully and without rushing. ⟨It's not hard for me, you know.⟩ I might even be willing [to memorialize my commitment to the same in a written instrument]. But you must take into *a count* that . . . although, *technique-ily*, it's possible, if need be, for me to perform the whole thing in one breath, ⟨it's, rather, that, before we get to a rousing chorus, I'd simply need a nice, long rest.⟩

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LOLA: [Rest not, want not. He just drones on and on!]

I get it. Love songs are not your *forte*. But whatever Lola wants, Lola gets.© Now, let's make some music. [Something with a good beat. That you can dance to.]

THE MONK: [{*To the audience*} Hey! Check out old full-octave-higher-than-the-score© over there! You heard the lady! She wants a tenor up there, not a damn soprano.] ⟨She needs her a major sign of *forte*-itude. [As if *resting* ever denoted that!]⟩

It just so happens, babe, you'll get no *complainchants* from me. [Talk about off the charts!] I'm an organ man myself. Into instrumental music. And I got me one mean set o' pipes, all plain as my nose in your face. [There's no rest for the *lick*-ed.] So, open wide for a great big fat one because, I swear! I'm sung like a horse down there and I never miss a beat. [Come on, baby: let's rock n' roll!]⟩

LOLA: Point/counterpoint, I said: to handle my bass. To blend with. [Hustle and flow. So, get out your instruments!] I want a musician gonna go crazy on me.©

THE MONK: Sure thing! And, by the way, I can play it straight too: as an arrow. [In unison, unisex, whatever. Group or solo. As the need arises.] All of it pleasing to the *ear*, ⟨there, and everywhere.©⟩ When I'm in, I'm all in. *Unanimi-magnum-ously.*

THE GENDARME: Now, *that* I believe: he's all about the score. But I'm not afraid to go measure for measure with him any time.

Never fear, [sweetheart: I'm nothing if not upbeat, and you and I will get along like two *C*'s in a pod when I tickle your ivories.] Plus, I'll stick to the beat. [And-a-one, and-a-two, and-a-one-two—.]

THE MONK: [Then beat it, wouldya?] Dude. It's always the same old song with you, and I do mean *old* song!

[*To Lola*] You want to make beautiful music together with *that*?

[*To the Gendarme*] [What was it you said earlier? Go shiver your *timbres*, buddy, and, while you're at it,] why don'tcha go pair up with some cantor and head on out to Cambrai right now?

[{*To the audience*} What? It's only the music capital of the medieval world!]

And you and him'll make quite the pair because, dude: ⟨you got nothin'.⟩ It's like every single number's from the reign of the goddamn Merovingians! You know: The do-nothing kings?

LOLA: [*To the Monk*] You and me, then, my brother! Let's do it. Preferably something on the charts. [What do you say we get medieval on their asses?] How about *J'ay prins amours à ma devise*?

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[Her request meets with silence.]

[I don't think the audience knows that one. {*Gesturally, she might urge the audience to applaud for the song they'd like to hear.*} What about "I Live for Love?"© "Shop Around?"© "Good Old-Fashioned Lover Boy?"© "We Go Together?"©]

⟨*She sings with the Monk.*⟩[12]

THE MONK: Two-part harmony, babe: the better to *ear* you with, my dear. You and me. [{*Indicating the Gendarme*} He'll never make number one with that.]

CUPID: Oh, brother, that gal can sing! [Great set o' pipes on her too.]

LOLA: [*To the Monk*] Now, quit playin' around, my brother. It's time for the full production number. You and me. Let's do it, I said! Throw yourself into the role, [for God's sake]!

The two of them sing together.

THE GENDARME: You two sound like two bears sniffing each other's asses! [*He imitates farting noises.*]

[CUPID]: One more time!

They sing.

THE GENDARME: [Or like two cats in heat!] By all means, Mister Monk, keep it up. [Sing out, Louise!] Top the charts and all that jazz. I'll soon give you something to sing about because it just so happens that I've got a strategy of my own and, if I have my way, this campaign of yours will end in tears, as in: a good old-fashioned requiem. [Hell's bells!] You'll soon be caterwauling a different tune.

THE MONK: Personally, I do prefer to perform uninterrupted. [*Mais, chante toujours, tu m'intéresses!*] Besides, if you lose today's hearing, you'll just pop up again in another jurisdiction. [Or you'll take it up on *a-peal.*] So, go blow, pal, why don'tcha? Seek yourself a *remède de fortune* someplace else. I haven't even gotten to the [second] chorus!

They sing.

CUPID: ⟨Enough! Let's wrap this thing up.⟩ I'm ready to rule. It's time to render my verdict.

THE GENDARME: Yes, let's settle the score—shall we?—and, ⟨may it please the Court—and the audience too—⟩ let's do it by the book. [There's no need to rush. Your Honor might poll the jury. They can even answer in octosyllables.] Or why not simply postpone until next week? Or at least for another eight measures.

THE MONK: Oh, no you don't! In the name of Mary Magdalen, I assert my right to a speedy trial.

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LOLA: ⟨And *I* need immediate relief!⟩

THE GENDARME: And *I* request a continuance. [Or we could just flat-out adjourn.]

LOLA: A continuance? Oh, Captain, my Captain! That was hardly the gist of my motion. [*With an obscene gesture*] What? Don't tell me you need an extension? I wouldn't be callin' attention to that sorta thing if I were you!

THE GENDARME: I request a continuance.

THE MONK: ⟨Sure thing! To be continued. In the meantime—[*grabbing Lola*]—I'll be taking full custody⟩ right now! [Possession *is* nine-tenths of the law, you know and—{*to Lola*}—I'm ready to put a lien on you right now!]

[*To the Gendarme*] You can come back in *two* weeks, for all I care.

[An extensive push-me, pull-you ensues.]

THE GENDARME: I request a continuance.

LOLA: Again with the continuance! Oh Captain, my Captain! ⟨You must've been out of your mind, old man, tapped out like you are, taking up things you know nothing about.⟩ *Tsk, tsk, tsk.* Coming to court and, then, trying to leave things hanging. Going up against a *real* man like him and, then, trying to make a virtue of the fact that you can't even finish the job? [Motion denied!]

THE MONK: ⟨He's down with love, babe, and not in a good way. You got it. His number was up ages ago.⟩ And, for my own part, I submit that his best days are behind him. Worst of all, he's just not into it anymore. He's way too busted and broken to be in the game. He can't even get it up!

THE GENDARME: Run along, now, Recruit! ⟨Go sing Mass at church. Go to hell, for all I care.⟩ You, son, are barely old enough for the novitiate and—what?—because I'm old and gray, I'm to be cast aside? Banished? *Reductio ad absurdum?* I'm quite sure, by the by, that you did not understand my Latin.

Unlike you, ⟨we older men know our way around the social contract that is love: far better than some apprentice.⟩

LOLA: When a man's got no staff to raise for a good joust, do you think him and his boys stand a fighting chance against a woman's all-powerful shield? Seeing as you're way past your expiration date there, Officer, and, now that I'm in a position to compare you two side by side: I can tell you're just a great big pussy. It's a *prima facie* case. And that, *Monsieur*, is my considered opinion.

⟨**THE MONK:** [What she said!] You're a great big pussy. Compared to me, your flag's flyin' at half-staff. [Now, follow the yellow dick road© and fuck off!][13]⟩

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THE GENDARME: ⟨Our Father who art in—. Oh, go to hell!⟩

You too, you little slut. Go fuck yourself! You stink of religion. But, in the name of the sacred Passion of Christ, I swear: if it turns out you're assigned to be all holed up with that monk in his cloister, then you, woman, are done for, body and soul, and the *cell* with you! He'll have you every which way but loose. And that's why . . .

Here I come to save the day![©] One way or another, I'm getting you out of here right now. By force, if need be.

[A renewed physical push and pull erupts as each man tries to take possession of Lola.]

CUPID: Order! Order! Be reasonable, and justice shall be yours. ⟨Now, keep your hands to yourselves—this is no place for brute force—because nobody's manumitting anybody around here! And one of you's taking a hike.⟩[14]

THE GENDARME: What? Are you seriously thinking of placing her with that cloistered monk? ⟨*Puh-lease.*⟩

[{*To the Monk*} As for you, go manumit yourself!]

CUPID: [*Taking a full tour of the three litigants*] I'm merely giving due consideration to the matter of readiness for service: workmanlike versus labor-friendly. I'm sizing you up, all three of you characters—and your characters too—starting with this young lady. She's lovely and gracious, aside from which, our man of the cloth here is likewise young and fresh—gracious too—and, to top it all off, entirely up to the task.

What's more, he has gone so far as to suggest, in his own words, that you, Officer, have been found wanting: ⟨to wit: that you can't get it up.⟩ Dead as a doornail down there.

THE MONK: So stipulated, Your Honor. That's my story and I'm sticking to it.

THE GENDARME: [If wishes were horses, then—.] Better to ride an old paint[©] at a trot than some young stud chomping at the bit. [My boys in gray will do the job.]

LOLA: Yeah, yeah, yeah, hi-ho Silver! ⟨Been there, done that, heard it all.⟩ It ain't the color or the steed, it's the motion.[©] There's more than one way to skin a cat and you, Officer, got no skin in the game. For one thing, you're way past your prime.

THE GENDARME: Polite and well-bred to the end, I see. But some things get better with age, you know. Old coin has been in circulation longer but—by God!—it has real value on the streets. Unless it's counterfeit. And old money is better than new money.

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LOLA: And there's no wood like young wood. [You can't light a fire without a spark.©][15]

THE GENDARME: You're still much better off with an old dog like me, sweetheart. [He's all bark and no bite.] So, choose me!

LOLA: In the name of Saint Johnson, not a chance! Unless so ordered by the Court. *Maybe.* ⟨You're not my type.⟩

THE MONK: What? You think she was born yesterday? ⟨No, seriously:⟩ that she's so unworthy, so naïve, so totally lacking in street smarts that she doesn't know her way around a courtroom? Seeing how lovely and pretty and gracious she is, why the hell would she ever choose *you*? She's a living doll! Check out those gorgeous green-glass eyes. *Your* eyes are all gooey like some pathetic tomcat's.

THE GENDARME: Help me, Cupid, God of Love, I implore you: ⟨don't leave me wallowing in despair!⟩ Rule in my favor. Is there nothing I can say to convince you?

CUPID: [What do you want *me* to do about it?] If you've got a case, she's the one to make it to. So? Get over there and make an effort. Press that suit. Ask her nicely. Get down on your knees and beg.

THE GENDARME: [*He genuflects.*] I'm begging you, sweetheart, ⟨have a heart. Be nice.⟩ Do not forsake me, oh my darling© because, if you run off with that monk, you're ruined! But, with me, you'll be loved more than Paris loved Helen. Go with that monk and your honor's lost forever. Your goose is cooked.

LOLA: There's an old saying, goes something like this: "For what profits a man if he gains the whole world but loses his own soul?"

Profits plenty! So, how's about a little less honor and a lot more perks?

[*She grabs the Monk.*] *He*'s all I need! [Perks me right up]—get it?—and I like him just fine the way he is.

As for you, what can I tell you? Not interested. You're not man enough to do me like him.

THE GENDARME: It just so happens that, regarding certain natural exploits, I'll go head to head with any man. I just whistle a happy tune with the best of them and hold my head erect!© I can still get it up, you know.

⟨**THE MONK:** Uh-huh. What? for maybe one shot a week? That's the full extent of *his* manhood.⟩[16]

LOLA: One shot, I'd be lucky. Plus, it would take forever. I didn't exactly come to court, you know, for *more* pain and suffering. Or to wind up with

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the likes o' you! Not up for it and—guess what?—neither are you! You don't have what it takes to do the job.

[*To Cupid*] ⟨I don't want him, you hear? Don't even think about it. So, what's it going to be, Cupid? Thumbs up? Thumbs down? Wherever. Could you just rule already?⟩

THE GENDARME: Fine, let's get on with it, then, Cupid. Now! In the matter before the Court, who wins? Tell us. We've got to know.

CUPID: I do believe that it shall be . . . the monk! He gets the girl. You can't hold a candle to him.

THE GENDARME: Sidebar, Your Honor. I've proved my case to the *n*th degree—*ad octosyllable et syllabus probandum*—and I would, at the very least, invoke my right to be represented by counsel. Or renew my earlier request that the Court reconvene in one week's time: *in extenso continuum ad infinitum*.

LOLA: Why don't you just take a long walk off a short—. Talk about the measure of a man. You can hang from the highest tree!

THE GENDARME: Your Honor wishes to deliberate—I understand—and I shall abide by his ruling regardless. But, if it please the Court, I wish to produce testamentary evidence on my behalf, that my witnesses might be put to the *testes*. I shall demonstrate that it is more righteous—and more licit—that she be apportioned to me and to no other.

LOLA: [*Licit shmicit.* You ain't gettin' no portion o' this! And you can take your testicular evidence and shove it.]

A lengthy trial's not worth one red cent and this one's dragged on long enough. Okay, Cupid: rule already!

CUPID: [*To the litigants and the audience*] And so I shall. I'm getting to that right now:

I shall now address, for better or for worse, what I have come to see and learn and know today. And, by the way, anyone feeling aggrieved ⟨retains his right to⟩ take it up on appeal:

Whereas, in the first instance, all that this lovely young lady wants is love, which is the sole intent and purpose of her presence here today, to wit, pleasure;

Whereas she is cute and comely, her only care in the world being, ⟨with her *de profundis* in mind⟩, the acquisition of a hot young stud to take matters in hand: to paw her and to service her, ⟨as may be adjudged from the account springing from her own lips;⟩

Whereas said satisfaction sought therein ought rightly to be provided by a comely stud ⟨who'd just stick it the fuck in;⟩

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And, *whereas* the provision of said love-service depends in whole upon a certain physical stamina, an erection being *de rigueur*:⟩

Ergo, in light of the foregoing recital and, in consideration of the terms that you have heard cited, *et cetera*, *et cetera*:

⟨I mean to provide her with such a stud: one who is capable of doing his duty by her and, thereby, ending her worries forthwith. ⟩ And, furthermore:

Inasmuch as a man who cannot get it up is entirely unsuited to the task at hand and/or to the enjoyment of said property—[I mean, seriously,] he wouldn't know the first thing to do with her!—this Court is inclined, therefore, to provide, grant, and assign to this young lady, [with all rights and responsibilities appertaining thereto,] the aforementioned hot young stud to paw her and to service her and to treat her right,© day and night. No resting.

That is my ruling.

LOLA: Okay, Cupid! [Time's up and so is his.] You rule!

CUPID: ⟨Having now had the time and the space and the leisure to grant a full and fair hearing to the aforementioned particulars of the case adjudicated before us and⟩—[*sizing Lola up*]—having taken into consideration the entire body of evidence in her totality—*its* totality—as I've previously declared and summarized for all you gentlemen—and ladies—sitting in judgment out there today:

⟨Having likewise taken into full and successive consideration⟩ you two litigants, the better to ascertain which one is more fittingly outfitted and equipped for her pleasure and service:

[Slowly but surely, he invites cheering and/or financial contributions.]

Primo: in the first instance, milord *hunkibus monkibus—this* man—purports to be all the rage. Born for the role, ⟨he says:⟩ brings down the house every time. Puts on a show worth at least a thousand dollars a pop. [Might even be inclined to do an encore!] In addition to which, he has told us in his own words—*expressis verbis*—that you, ⟨Officer, have gone soft, and that mealy-mouthed mush is all you've got left. No *brio*;⟩

Wherefore, therefore, ⟨custody of the girl shall be awarded to . . . . ⟩ [Drumroll, please:]

Advantage, monk! ⟨The monk gets the goods! ⟩ That is my ruling.

⟨**LOLA:** Okay, Cupid! Thanks, man.⟩

THE GENDARME: But, in the name of the Virgin Mary, this is outrageous, Your Honor!

CUPID: That's my ruling and it stands. You were all at the trial. You've heard

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my reasoning. ⟨Just take it like a man [or go *stare decisis* yourself]!⟩ Besides, it's almost time to go. I hope that you've enjoyed the—.

[Wait: there's one more thing.]

THE GENDARME: A low blow indeed, but let there be no doubt: while I strongly disagree with the Court's decision, I do accept it.

THE MONK: Okay, Cupid! Good job! And, since you ruled in my favor, here's for your trouble: four hundred bucks for the whole shebang. ⟨Go buy yourself a little something so you can keep up that act of yours.⟩ And don't be scratching your head about any of this on your way out. Or lower.][17]

CUPID: [*Extending his purse toward the audience as well*] Oh, no you don't folks! [Prick up your ears and don't beat it yet.] *Deo gratias! De-oh-la-la!*

LOLA: Anything else comes up, Cupid—some *boner* of contention or other—we'll send for you right away, for sure. And you'll come on the double, right *tooh-la-la-la-la*!—this very spot. [You might even get a good Yelp review: you know, like,] from *nobis*.

CUPID: *De-oh-la-la!* [Prick up your ears, folks,] but don't beat it yet!

THE GENDARME: Although I got creamed in court here today, you, pretty boy, shall nonetheless have from me this hundred-dollar bill. To keep up that look. Go buy yourself a new outfit.

CUPID: *Deo gratias! De-oh-la-la! De-oh* just beat it already, folks!

[Possible closing music.[18]*]*

Finis

NOTES

1. You can see *RPF, vol. 1* here: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k372046.r=recueil%20de%20pieces%20rares%20et%20facetieuses%20tome%20premier?rk=21459; or here, which will land you on our Figure 5: https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101072365966&view=1up&seq=174

2. Compare her *desesperance* and the Gendarme's later *desespoir* (*RTLF*, v. 28; 140) with, e.g., the deadly urban legend of the suicide of an actor in Meaux who had played Despair (*DBD*, 169–81).

3. For facsimiles, see https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b525044884.r=chansonnier%20de%20montchenu?rk=42918;4; and https://www.facsimiles.com/facsimiles/chansonnier-de-jean-de-montchenu; and, to hear the song: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTNfaurU0nM. For other sources, along with the Middle French lyrics and an English translation, see http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/CH/CH036.html (all accessed 22 September 2020).

4. For Bercow's greatest hits (accessed 22 September 2020), see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYycQTm2HrM

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5. In an apparent response to other licensing interests, the ASCAP Work ID for this song (400075030) was removed from the registry as of 24 March 2021.

6. Try "All By Myself"© or, for an entirely different sensibility, the Renaissance "*Bonjour mon coeur*"; but I'd go with any one of at least three musically resonant Lolas, be it the Kinks' gender-bending "Lola,"© "Naughty Lola" ["*Ich bin die fesche Lola*"]© from *The Blue Angel*, or "Whatever Lola Wants"© from *Damn Yankees*.

7. I would normally have provided a verse translation of the first nineteen lines, which depart from the usual octosyllabic couplets in favor of A-B-B-A-A-C-A; C-C-D-C-D-D-E; D-E-E-F-F. But it will be easier to update the geographical locales in production without. And, somehow, "Down in MacConnachy Square"© from *Brigadoon* doesn't quite fit the bill (unless you prefer *Schmigadoon*).

8. Depending on run time and production sensibilities, Lola could break into a production number in anticipation of the musicality to come. Any number of songs would serve as good translations of her *Cupido, c'est ce qu'il me fault / Je ne requiers que telz plaisances* (*RTLF*, vv. 85–86) or *C'est justement ce qu'il me faut / Avoir requiers telles plaisances* (Rousset, 125–26), such as "Girls Just Want to Have Fun"© or "Just What I Needed."©

9. As above for Lola (notes 6 and 8), I'd go with some sort of musical enhancement for the Monk's departure from the usual rhyming couplets (*RTLF*, vv. 107–16; Rousset, 127): maybe along the lines of "Hard-Knock Life"© or "Poor, Poor, Pitiful Me."© Recall that a *rondeau triolet* typically introduces scene changes.

10. Here is the callout for "song-speech," as it were: *dirë une chanson* (v. 224; see above, "ABT," § "Prose, Verse, and Music"). Exceptionally, I reproduce a long, lightly annotated excerpt below of *RTLF*, vv. 226–60; and Rousset, 133–36; my emphasis. (Note that Rousset's p. 135 is printed erroneously as "155.") See also Martin's superb gloss in *SFQS*, notes 72–97; and Blackburn's translation of the entire scene, which is, naturally, more strictly musicological than mine, as when she highlights the soft vs. the hard "hexachord" ("Lascivious Career," 39–40).

LA FILLE

Si vous voulés que je sostienne
Le bas, si baillés bon dessus,
⟨*Qui pousse sans estre lassuz*
Et gringote ut ré, mi fa sol.⟩
Car aucunesfois sans dessus
Mauvais chantre est par ung desol. [This last term, possibly a hapax.]

LE GENDARME

Je ne chante que de bemol.

LE MOYNE

Et moy je chante de becare,
Hault et gros commë une barre, ⟨*Gros & roide comme une barre*⟩
Quant j'ay ung dessoubz de nature.

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LE GENDARME

Je ne chante que de mesure,
Tout bellement sans me haster.

LA FILLE

Se vous ne scavez gringoter
⟨Dru & menu, roide & à poinct,
Avec vous ne chanteray point,⟩
Dessus mon bas de contrepoint,
Brief je ne vous soustiendray point,
Car je vueil c'on y gringote.

LE GENDARME

Je bailleray note pour note
Tout bellement sans me haster,
Et penseré aucunesfois. . . .
S'il est besoing en une clause.
⟨Sans d'avantage m'efforcer,
Et si, ains que recommencer
Faudra que long temps me repose.⟩

LA FILLE

Oncque chant où il y a pause
Ne denota bonne puissance,
Il n'est que chanter à plaisance
En toutes joyeuses musiques.

LE MOYNE

Quant est d'instrumens organistes ⟨à plaisance⟩
Gros et ouvers pour ung plain chant,
J'en suis fourni comme ung marchant,
Par ma foy, il ne m'en fault rien.

LA FILLE

Je vueil ung tel musicien
Pour fournir une basse contre.

LE MOYNE

[De]puis, une foy que je rencontre
Uniçum en ma chanterie,
C'est une droicte melodie
Et plaisant que de m'escouter.

LE GENDARME

Je ne doubte homme pour chanter
Chant de mesure bien nombré.

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11. For *qui pousse sans estre lassuz* (in Rousset only [134]; above note 10), I hear a pun on the name of the celebrated composer, Orlando de Lasso. So does Martin (*SFQS*, note 73).

12. Depending on your musical sensibility, try prefacing this with "not classical, not top forty, not country, not Motown, not jazz," etc. Personally, I'm partial to the anachronistic, macaronic vibe of "We Go Together,"© as in "like rama, lama, lama, ka dinga da dinga dong"© or to the *ooh-la-la* of Queen's "Good Old-Fashioned Lover Boy."©

13. Instead of Lola delivering this information (*RTLF*, vv. 316–23), in Rousset, it's the Monk (137), whence my reprise. But I've avoided having him repeat Lola word for word.

14. This apparent allusion to *mainmise*—to release someone from slavery—appears in Rousset (138). Martin hears it too (*SFQS*, note 110).

15. Monetary value is also connected to Lola qualifying a lengthy trial as not being worth a *maille* (v. 413). In Martin's "battle of the proverbs" (*SFQS*, note 115), *Il n'est feu que de jeune bois* (*RTLF*, v. 358; Rousset, 139) recalls the poem that followed the "Silvestre" or "Crapelet" edition of *Bro Job* (*ID*, 182): "*La maniere pour cognoistre de quel bois se chauffe l'Amour*" or "How to Kindle the Fires of Love."

16. The Monk's line, evocative of a similar one in *Slick Brother Willy* (*ID*, 286), appears in Rousset only (141), after which comes Lola's request for the verdict. In the *RTLF*, Lola delivers an extra speech (vv. 392–97). Why not have him launch into some musical mockery of the Monk, who "ain't too proud to beg"?©

17. *Deux ducatz* (v. 458): per my money math, a gold ducat—if it's indeed a gold one—is valued at about $200 USD. The Gendarme will offer an *escu*, valued at half that (*RTLF*, v. 466; Rousset, 144).

18. Try "Hot Stuff";© "Hold Your Head Up";©or "I Can See *Clerkly* Now, [the rain is gone]"?©

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10.

Witless Protection

[La Mère, la Fille, le Tesmoing, L'Amoureulx, et l'Oficial] (L'Official)

CAST OF CHARACTERS

[JUDY,] the MOTHER (La Mère)
MARION, the DAUGHTER (Marion)
[The MARSHAL, a nonspeaking role] (Le Sergent)
The WITNESS, WILLY NUTLEY (Le Témoin/Guillot des Noix)
The LOVER, COLIN BEEFCAKE (L'Amoureux/Le Beau Colin)
and the Ecclesiastical JUDGE (L'Oficial)
[A Security Guard]

PRODUCTION NOTES

Revised? Reworked? Adapted? Censored? Self-censored? We don't know exactly who or why; but *somebody* messed with the anonymous *Farce nouvelle à cinq personnages, c'est asçavoir la Mère, la Fille, le Tesmoing, L'Amoureulx, et l'Oficial* (*RLV*, #22; fols. 103v–109v). Sometime toward the end of the sixteenth century or the beginning of the seventeenth (*RF*, 2: 78), an unknown individual from Rouen expunged some 14 of the play's 362–372 verses (depending on who's counting) and, in so doing, he significantly compromised its meaning. But who was he? An editor readying the play for a published edition? A director who didn't quite like the vibe? A member of an acting troupe wishing to avoid trouble later? Was the individual simply attempting to clarify the meaning of *L'Oficial* for a later audience, as my friend, Mario Longtin suggests? Or was he an actual censor using the power of his office to limit artistic expression?[1] We return momentarily to those unanswerable questions but, to begin with what we know: the *RLV* original is in notably good shape with regular rhyming octosyllabic couplets and only one dropped verse. It was first

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edited in *RFMSJ* (vol. 2, #22)—again, not paginated continuously and with no verse numbers—albeit with a number of editorial errors and misreadings; and it has enjoyed a long life.[2] Further editions followed: Mabille in *CFSM*, who deemed it another *Pathelin* (2: 33–58; 35), Philipot in *Six Farces (*77–115), Tissier in *RF* (2: 73–128), and Martin in *SFQS*. Critical opinion is divided as to when *Witless Protection* was actually written, but it was manifestly popular enough in Normandy to have been summarized in 1643 by the Norman playwright Antoine Le Métel d'Ouville in *Contes aux heures perdues* (*SFQS*, note 156). Other insights about its date (once thought to be the mid-fifteenth century) can be gleaned from the myriad allusions to specific coins. The presence of *moutons d'or*, for instance, with *agnels*, *ducas*, *escus*, *testons*, and *soubz* (2: 15; 18), prompts both Tissier's proposition of 1500 or thereabouts (*RF*, 2: 80–84; *FFMA*, 1: 164) and Martin's of the first half of the sixteenth century (*SFQS*, notes 97, 98, 121). Petit de Julleville recapped the plot (*RTC*, 172), as did Faivre (*Répertoire*, 313–15); and, while I know of no English translation of our play, Tissier penned one in modern French (*FFMA*, 1: 161–73). For a time, there was a Portuguese translation online too; but, sadly, *O Provisor* was subsequently removed. In the absence of any known medieval or Renaissance performance, I can also recommend this modern one by Longtin's troupe at the University of Western Ontario: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YLklj-ygblw (accessed 22 November 2019).

Enter poor, naïve Marion, a sister of sorts of Guillaume Coquillart's "simple-girl" complainant (*ROMD*, 233–43). She has been tricked into premarital sex by the unscrupulous "Colin Beefcake" (Le Beau Colin); but, when Colin reneges on his promise to marry her, Marion's unnamed, legally savvy mom moves to enforce that promise through the courts. (She's "Judy" in honor of Judge Judith Sheindlin.) Nor was litigation about seduction, ravishment, and broken promises of marriage some flight of farcical fancy. Indeed, Hannah Skoda and Renato Barahona have extensively documented the historical imposition of a sentence of marriage as the legal "remedy" for rape.[3] Thus, we find Judy seeking assistance from a multitasking Marshal (Le Sergent) who exercises a variety of juridical functions from process-server to bailiff (Introd., § "Legalese"). Technically, he has no lines to deliver; but he is clearly present on stage.

Once the parties appear before a relatively ethical Judge, the verdict depends entirely on the testimony of the logorrhea- and nostalgia-prone witness, "Willy Nutley" (Guillot des Noix or Le Tesmoing), a latter-day Tacitus flailing about the good old days. True: his very name implies "uselessness" in that nuts were commodities of little value; but Willy tells a tale so vividly

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dispositive that Petit de Julleville suspected it was inspired by real-life events (*RTC*, 172). That said, Willy is a proto-Flaubert with his own *style indirect libre*, which renders him a tough Nutley to crack. Between all the reported speech and an ever-shifting perspective, it's often challenging to discern who said or did what to whom (below, note 11).

All standard farcical fare so far, right? What was it, then, that so required reworking?

Certainly, a censor would have seen such content before in the popular stories of the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* (*SFQS*, note 143) or in other *RLV* farces like *Johnny Slowpoke* (#11). Umpteen medieval schoolboys, moreover, would have *practiced* that content while cutting their teeth on Seneca's *controversiae*. As Marjorie Curry Woods demonstrates in "Rape and the Pedagogical Rhetoric of Sexual Violence," a medieval disputational system steeped in Seneca and Ovid had long habituated young men to the violent legalistic mindset of such test cases as "The Man Who Raped Two Girls" (*Controversiae*, 1: 5; Woods, 67; "Introd."). In *Witless Protection*, the problem can be traced to the Judge, who, by our standards, is no shining example of moral probity. In fact, when we first meet him, he sounds rather like the lusty Priest of *Highway Robbery* preparing to ease on down the road (*RC*, #10; *ID*, #3). And we all know how *that* turned out: namely, with sodomy. To add insult to injury, this particular Judge was originally—and logically—scripted as an ecclesiastical *Oficial* as opposed to a secular *Juge*. As in *Default Judgment Day* (#2), all delicts related to the sacrament of marriage were subject to *ecclesiastical*, not *civil*, authority. (We've previously seen an *Oficial* assessing a bumpkin's fitness for the priesthood in *The Student Who Failed His Priest Exam* [*RC*, #11; *FF*, #4]). And there was the rub.

In *RLV*, #22, the word *L'Oficial* has been scratched out everywhere except in the farce's subtitle (fol. 103v) and replaced throughout with *Le Juge*. Sometimes, those emendations even necessitated rewriting a verse or two. The unnamed *remanieur* was probably responsible for the closing moral as well, which lands with all the *Deus ex machina* implausibility of the King-placating ending of *Tartuffe* or, for that matter, of *Immaculate Deception* (*ID*, #12). And yet, any effort at censorship ultimately backfired. Notwithstanding the awkward shift from an ecclesiastical target to a secular one, this *Farce nouvelle* came to be known as *L'Official* (the modern spelling), preserving the very term that was repeatedly effaced. It is all the more ironic, therefore, that Martin rechristened it *The Witness* (*Le Témoin*). Not that there's anything wrong with that. Willy is the true star of the show, speechifying for a full 187 verses to the Judge's 79. And, like Martin, I too have restored the deleted language,

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which I signal with angle brackets in the play and strikethroughs in notes 5, 6, and 7. But I prefer to deny any putative censor his final triumph.

One last thing: *Witless Protection* has little hope of surviving the #MeToo movement unless we update some of the dialogue and reverse dramaturgically the Pyrrhic victory of marriage as a "happy ending" for sexual abuse. Nevertheless, I do believe that such an adaptation is possible. As the farce moves through the familiar steps of the legal process—warrant, arrest, trial, proof, sentencing, and punishment (*RF*, 2: 84–89)—another indictment is well worth emphasizing. Try hitting back at perverted eavesdroppers, testicle-driven *testimony*, and ubiquitous voyeurism, including that of an unindicted coconspirator, the theater audience.

Sets, Costumes, or Props

What *Holy Deadlock* did with crazy threads (*HD*, 222–25), Willy Nutley does with an endless inventory of clothes, as if to invite performing them *materially*. There are shoes, boots, galoshes, and pointy slippers ("Krakows," to be exact, which were worn by old men, young women [*SFQS*, note 50], and by the Pope, as in the "shoes of the fisherman"). There are jackets, surcoats, silky shirts, blouses, slips, bodices, corsets, and hoopskirts (the aristocratic Spanish *vasquine*). And let's not forget that double-edged weapon of choice, the "dirk" also called a "bollock dagger." It owes its moniker to the two distinctive oval swellings on its hilt resembling testes ("bollocks"). As in *Boogie Nights*, that thing was meant for "Digglering."

Scholarly References to Copyrighted Materials (in order of appearance and indicated by © within the text)

"What's Up with That?" (from *Saturday Night Live*). By Katreese Barnes. BMI Work #11137681.

"Home on the Range." Daniel E. Kelly and Brewster Higley (1872).

"Ride a Cock Horse to Banbury Cross." Traditional.

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[SCENE 1]

*[Sets include: the two homes of next-door neighbors Judy and Willy, separated by a decrepit, boarded-up wall; the road into town; the Judge's home; and an ecclesiastical tribunal {*l'officialité*} situated either inside a church or, alternatively, inside a modern police station with an adjoining courtroom complete with judge's chambers and metal detectors. Nearby bars and hemp fields might round out the ambience; and an opening pantomime might depict the backstory: the fall of Marion, Judy's legal consultations, etc. Lights up on the home of Judy and Marion.]*

[JUDY,] THE MOTHER, *begins*: Christ on the cross, I'd sooner have gouged the both of his eyes out with my own two hands! Now, *that* would have been justice! Doing my daughter like that. Under my roof! And, to top it all off: "Where's your proof anyway, lady?," he says, "no witnesses!" We'll soon see about that.

MARION: It would serve him right, I swear! He's a cheater, isn't he, Mama?

JUDY: The pain, Marion! It's just too much to bear. I'm beside myself. What's to become of you now? This is your whole future at stake, Marion. I don't care if he goes stark raving mad: we've got to get you married off, come hell or high water!

MARION: Why did he have to come around here for anyway, Mama?—Lord have mercy!—all hot and, you know, botherin' me?

JUDY: What am I going to do with you, Marion? You just don't have smarts enough to ward off a hardened criminal like that.

MARION: No, ma'am. Ain't that the truth!

JUDY: Which is why I, for one, would like to hear what the judge has got to say about all this. It just so happens I've been all over town consulting and, as I understand the process, in order to prevail, we need proof. And, if I have my way, we'll get it too.

You know Willy Nutley, right?

[MARION]: Yes, Mama, I know him. He's the one who heard the whole thing when he locked me in the bedroom, goin': "My little Marion, we'd get on real good if you'd just—. You wanna be my wife, don'tcha?"

And, bless my soul, I give him my answer, just like you taught me, Mama. I go: "Sure thing, that would suit me just fine."

And, then, he—you know—he has his way with me.

But Willy's a man of his word, Mama. Got lots of folks around here gonna believe him first shot out of the box.

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JUDY: First shot, is it? [And it better not be a shotgun wedding either!] But that's right, dear, he *will* be believable.

Now, come on, let's go. Move it! I'm not letting up until I find a marshal, who could hardly refuse to have him cited. That devil won't get away with it this time.

MARION: Coming, Mama, fast as I can. His house isn't far from here.

[SCENE 2]

[Pantomime. A gesticular debate ensues as to which man to fetch first: the Marshal or Willy. With Marion in tow, Judy opts for witness Willy but, not finding him at home, she proceeds to seek the Marshal, who is likewise not at home. By the time the lights come up on the Judge in Scene 3 and on the courtroom in Scene 5, a certain amount of time will have been wasted going back and forth, necessitating a shortcut to the venue.]

[SCENE 3]

[Lights up on the home of the Ecclesiastical Judge.]

THE JUDGE *speaks*: I haven't left the house in ages: not even to do my duty by all those good folks in my jurisdiction. So, here goes nothing; for, he who keeps to the path of the righteous and upholds the law is prized by God and man alike. [By the audience too.]

[Exit the Judge for the tribunal. Once inside the juridico-ecclesiastical space, he sequesters himself inside his chambers, surrounded by a mountain of paperwork. Lights down.]

[SCENE 4]

[Pantomime. On the road into town, the women have now located the Marshal. After much animated gesticulation on their part and writing on his, they go their separate ways. The Marshal heads for court; while the women, documentation in hand, set out to find Willy, who is still not at home. They then hasten to the courthouse.]

[SCENE 5]

[At the courthouse where, à la Pathelin*, Willy might be testifying already in another case as an "expert witness" or, perhaps, as a party in another lawsuit. He absents himself shortly thereafter and wanders around.]*

Returning from the Sergeant's, the Daughter and the Mother [are] talking together in the [foyer off] the great hall.

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MARION: This is it, Mama, we're here.

[When attempting to enter the courtroom, the women might be barred by locked doors or by a Security Guard.]

JUDY: I know a shortcut. Come on.

[Marion and Judy make a grand show of their exit and enter the courtroom through the back door.]

MARION: Look, Mama, it's the court! [It's the church! It's the church-court!] There's, like, a judge and everything. And jury people. Full crowd!

Know something, Mama? Folks can trash the cops as much as they like, but me: I'm awful glad they're around. That no-good cheater ain't gonna be makin' no more trouble for *me*, I do solemnly swear! [Fool me once, shame on you, fool me twice, umm. . . .]

That nice officer sure didn't waste no time takin' care of us either, did he now, Mama? Gave us our warrant right quick too. Here's the letter! And not one word out of place. [*Loudly*] All fully *executized*. See? In this *disposition*? Got the whole story right there!

THE JUDGE: Oh my God, that's some hue and cry! What's up with that?©

JUDY: Don't just stand there, Marion. You're so well-spoken all of a sudden, go on, then: speak well! Let's have it. Make your opening statement.

THE JUDGE: I'd best inquire.

Is no one planning to proceed?

JUDY: Good day, Your Honor, and God bless you, sir.

THE JUDGE: It's about time. What do you have to tell me?

JUDY: Your Honor, [only] the most reprehensible, the most outrageous treachery and betrayal that you ever heard in all your born days!

THE JUDGE: Uh-huh. So? Whodunit? Who might this dastardly character be? Perp got a name or what?

JUDY: He's nobody really, Your Honor. He's just some guy, goes by the name of Colin and—may his brains get fried in an epileptic fit!—I had myself a beautiful, beautiful daughter and, just look at her now! That lowlife punk goes and dishonors her and, here she is, poor wretch—[a regular Sister Sigh-Baby]—seeking justice and demanding reparations.[4]

THE JUDGE: Is that his legal name? There's nothing I can do, you know, if he hasn't been properly served.

MARION: [It wasn't at a restaurant or nothing, Your Honor . . . Father . . . Your Honor . . .] but, check, please! Got the whole bill o' particulars right here, like I said. In this *disposition*.

JUDY: Quit babbling, girl, and let *me* do the talking, would you?

[Our *position*,] Your Honor, is that, for this grievous wrong, I have

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filed against Colin. He raped my daughter, sir, after which, he said he never laid a hand on her, notwithstanding his having promised—allegedly in good faith, Your Honor—to marry her: *and* after having made numerous false representations to that effect, the better to get, as it were, an advance on the goods.

THE JUDGE, *speaking to the Girl*: Is this true? Why don't you tell me all about it, sweetheart?

MARION: [I think he might've slipped me a little something, Your Honor.] But I wasn't so out of it that I didn't notice I got taken advantage of.

I didn't mean to do anything wrong.

THE JUDGE: Step forward, Colin! Come out, come out wherever you are, or it's a bench warrant for you, son, and a default judgment in their favor.

Enter Colin Beefcake.

COLIN: I'm right here, Your Honor. No need to yell, may it please the Court.

THE JUDGE: So, get over here, boy! Come on down! [Now, raise your right hand and—.] Did you [or did you not] have carnal knowledge of this young lady here?

COLIN: She's lying!

Back me up here, folks.

JUDY: *He's* lying, Your Honor—despicable lowlife that he is!—and I've got the hard evidence to prove it! [And there better not be any more victim blaming either!]

COLIN: Hey, lady! Go ahead, knock yourself out. Prove it!

And may the Lord strike me dead if I ever—. I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Thing over there!

JUDY: In the name of the blessed Virgin Mary, you need look no further than—. If Your Honor would be so good as to examine my—.

[She registers that Willy Nutley has wandered off.]

My witness should be along shortly.

THE JUDGE: Call the witness and make it snappy!

[There is no immediate sign of Willy; but the distracted Judge proceeds.]

You—Witness, speak! [Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and—? Wait, where the hell is he?]

Enter the Witness.

Get over here, man, before you find yourself six feet under four days hence!

[*He makes the sign of the cross.*] Now, in the name of the sacred Passion: in the matter before us—it's only your eternal salvation or damnation at stake here, for God's sake!—do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?[5]

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THE WITNESS, WILLY NUTLEY, *speaks*: I do. Yes sir, Father . . . Your Honor . . . Father . . . ⟨I don't know nothin' 'bout tryin' no cases but, sure thing:[6]⟩ I cannot tell a lie, sir—especially not to so illustrious a jurist as yourself. I'll tell you everything I know.

Once upon a time, when I was coming of age and a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love . . . .

There wasn't no kinda service back in the day, you know, Your Honor. There was no valet waiting on you hand and foot like today, laying out a whole spread with your pitchers and your carafes and your place-settings and your what-have-you—.

THE JUDGE: And of what possible relevance is all this?

WILLY NUTLEY: Your Honor, Your Honor! Begging the Court's indulgence, but you didn't use to have to get all made up or nothin' to please your boyfriend. Or your girlfriend. Or your boy-girlfriend. And, [you out there, *Messieurs-Dames et, vous, les Messieurs-Dames*:] you didn't have to make up no sweet nothings neither. And the skies were not cloudy all day.©

THE JUDGE: And he's off again! What's up with that?© [And I'll have you know that song was not written till the nineteenth century.]

WILLY NUTLEY: What I mean to say, Your Honor, is that, nowadays, it's all about credit and debt, debt and credit, [credit and debt, credit-card debt]. . . . A fella's gotta sow his wild oats, for sure, that's the thing. But, then, it's all ride a cock horse© all over town in some kinda leather getup; only, then, he's got no money for the oats and the—. *Hey!* And what about Little Miss Clotheshorse? She's all tarted up too in her fancy-ass corset and hoopskirt *à la Basquaise* when she gets back from her pony ride!

And the chambermaids? You poor little things! Didn't use to be like that, you know, but, now, *you're* the ones gotta clean up everything the mistress dragged through the mud [along with her good name] 'cause—. Wanna know why? It's stuck to her hem and, *ahem*! You know what she managed to pick up down there? It's a great big turd! And what's dung is dung.

And you, Page! Quick! Get a basket 'cause the same thing goes for *Monsieur*! Bustin' his sorry ass just so he can giddy up, giddy up, giddy up, horsey, every which way! And, brother, fill 'er up with all them shitty rags from when he spoiled his fancy cloak. Them boots was made for street-walkin';© but whatever happened to goin' off into the fields with your fine filly? For heaven's sake, people, get off your feet! Donkeys! Mules! Jackasses! Can't they keep them animals off the streets? Why, back in the good old days of the double-sided dirk, folks was wearin'

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themselves them pointy Polish shoes—[Krakows, they call 'em, Your Honor]—and you didn't need no dirk diggler-daggler either when you were off "muling around," no siree, Bob. Such a waste. This is madness, so help me God!

THE JUDGE: What is the meaning of this? [And don't call me Bob.]

WILLY NUTLEY: I'm [kickin' it] old-school, Your Honor: talking about the good old days.

THE JUDGE: [Objection anybody? {*Making a fist*} Move to strike?] You're a funny guy. Now, quit fooling around and answer the question that has been put to you.

WILLY NUTLEY: But, Your Honor, Your Honor! The sticks—the *stakes*, I mean—are huge! ⟨You gotta go all the way back to when folks, they used to get summoned to appear in *Ecclesiastical* Court. I seen it myself.[7]⟩ I seen how a man used to get by, he did, with a new shirt maybe every two months or so. I seen how a man's wood used to go for just six cents a cord, tops; but, this year, it's all the way up to *forty*-six. There oughta be a law, Your Honor! [In for a penny, in for that pound o' flesh.] It's pathetic. And I seen how there never used to be but two or three lawyers in this whole town; only, now, I seen a hundred cases go all the way up to a whole thousand, all come and gone. And that's just the death penalty cases.

THE JUDGE: Are you quite finished? Chop-chop! Get to the point, man, before we add one more.

WILLY NUTLEY: I seen how, in this whole one-horse town, there used to be just the one mule and the one young lady astride—pretty, ugly, pretty ugly—didn't make no never mind. But, nowadays, Your Honor, you got at least a hundred of 'em. I can't make heads or tails of it . . . her . . . it . . . unless it's that *everybody's* nobility these days! It's a real social surge, Your Honor, lemme tell you, and, if we get any more of 'em crawling outta the woodwork like that, it's bye-bye merchandise and bye-bye bourgeoisie! And, speakin' o' *serge*:

I seen how there never used to be none of them corsets or petticoats or hoopskirts *à la Basquaise* and, what's *worsted*: that's all you got nowadays. Serge, serge, serge! It's all the rash. I seen how what they used to call a tunic is now some kinda fancy-shmancy blazer, all embroidered with that frilly, filigree crap like you'd engrave on the hilt of your dirk. It's like a man's got a double-edged sword o' *Damaskles* hanging over his head, Your Honor, courtesy of his own personal patron saint of all that junk: Saint Jezebel! Hey, whatever happened to your good old-fashioned scabbard of cold hard steel anyhow? You know: bollocks!

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I seen how you didn't use to be able to find but a single nurse in this whole city but, now—I swear by our patron, good old Saint Ned of Rouen!—they're a dime a dozen, I guarantee. And, bless my soul, what's with everybody gettin' all booted up and slipping into them fancy shoes and stockings for church? What's up with that?©

All things considered, Your Honor, it's a world gone mad. Why, even the good old golden *agnel* ain't in circulation no more. Nope. Got a whole new *angle* these days. All you ever hear about is ducats, ducats, ducats, and Lord, love a ducat, Your Honor! But not like they was back in the day, when you used to get at least twelve- or fourteen-carat gold twenty-four seven. Now, you're lucky if you get eight or ten.

I seen how folks walkin' the streets at night didn't use to get mugged like you see nowadays; so, wanna know what? We might just as well start all over again on accounta it's all gone haywire. Whole world's turned upside down. Why, back in the Dark Ages, things was nasty! But, if you was out in the frozen wetlands or wherever, maybe you came down with a little cold. There wasn't no talk of no chills and ague. Only now, it's all cataracts and Cathars!© Ain't nowhere on land or sea where you won't catch your death.

And, oh, how happy was she? The old-fashioned gal, that is, and rich! All decked out, she was, in serge or worsted wool: perky little ass in one of them gorgeous corsets. Before all the hustle-bustle of today, she was a real clotheshorse, she was. Had herself a dress for every season all trimmed in squirrel fur or—holy Saint Marten!—fuzzy-wuzzy beaver. In the closet. Twill *petite mort* do us part, sweetheart. What a doll! I can see it all now, like it was yesterday. . . .

THE JUDGE: [{*To the audience*} Objection? Irrelevant much? Im*material*?] I do believe someone's taken leave of his senses!

Been drinkin' the crazy-juice, have we, pal? Now, answer me and get to the point![8] I'm not talking about back in the day. Did you or did you not have occasion to witness Colin in the act of, shall we say, "boobytrapping" this young lady here present into some hokey-pokey? Ramming it in, as it were?

WILLY NUTLEY: [You got that right, Your Honor, a real battering ram. But *wool* she or won't she?] You don't want me to lie, do you? Me neither. Now, listen up 'cause here it comes: the greatest story you ever did hear. [And, by the by, I'm as sober as a judge!]

THE JUDGE: So, get on with it, man, I haven't got all day.

WILLY NUTLEY: Where was I again? Wait. I've got it. I was saying how the

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whole world's grown tenfold since back in the day, Your Honor. [The universe is expanding—.[9]

THE JUDGE: What is that your business?

WILLY NUTLEY]: —and, seein' as how everything's all topsy-turvy and all, I don't know what to tell you, Your Honor. Can't rightly say whether that's what folks, they call "doin' it" these days but this much I *will* tell you, sir, straight up, and it ain't no joke. I cannot tell a lie: if that's what passes for love-makin'—in my day, we used to say "doin' your marital duty," you know—then everything's gone to pot. Game over. They done broke the mold, I do solemnly swear.

THE JUDGE: Is that so? Really?

WILLY NUTLEY: [*He points to his eyes and solicits applause.*] Yes sir, Your Honor, and, if I may: the *eyes* have it! That's my story and I'm sticking to it. It's my testimony, I swear! At least if doin' the deed looks anything like it did when we were doin' it back in *my* day.

THE JUDGE: Now we're getting somewhere. I find your testimony credible. You saw the two of them together, did you?

WILLY NUTLEY: Yes, sir, Your Honor, sure seemed like it. But Marion was on the bottom, you know?

THE JUDGE: And what kinda cash we talkin' about here, pal? What did he pony up? A couple o' hundred?

A few bucks?

Don't tell me he was nickel-and-diming the girl![10]

WILLY NUTLEY: [Oh where, oh where are the hos of yesteryear?] How should I know, Your Honor? But I'll tell you anyway. Hell, I'll swear to it: the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but—. [He was sure takin' it all in stride, Your Honor, and she:] she wasn't puttin' up no fight neither. Ain't like she was screamin' or nothing. And, then:

["Do it," he says. And, then:]

"Do it," she says, all nice and pretty-like. "You're a real stud and everything, Colin," she goes, "but this is only because we're getting married. You hear me, sweetheart?"

And, then, Colin, he's still at it but he ain't no fool. You could tell he didn't much like the sound o' that.

THE JUDGE: But he agreed to it, did he not? [And the girl gave consent?][11]

WILLY NUTLEY: Yes, indeedy, [Your Honor,] most definitely, 'cause she's got his you-know-whats in a vice now. Them gambs is clamped down one over the other so tight that poor Colin, he ain't goin' nowhere. Which ain't exactly no ball for *him*, Your Honor, when he's dyin' to get in and all.

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But, then, she goes: he ain't doin' nothin' unless he promises to marry her at the parish church—with a Mass and everything, so it's all on the up and up—and [make an honest woman out of her and so on and so forth].

But Colin, see, [he ain't the "Marion" kind]; so, he's still all:

He imitates a lower voice.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah, my little muenster!" like, in a stage whisper, you know? ["Cross my fingers and hope to die. Got your marriage *licentious* right here"].

"A cheese!" she goes, Your Honor! "You're not gettin' off a single shot for a cheese! Not for as long as I live!" That's what *she* said.

So, what else is Colin gonna do but kinda go along with it? Like a ram to the slaughter, Your Honor: I mean, hey! Why buy the cow when you can get the milk for free?

So, then, he gets hard. And, he takin' his sweet time and everything. And you got your groping and your kissing and your layin' her down on her backside. And, then, he feeds her a few more lines—five or six maybe—and, then, in goes Mister Johnson and—wham, bam, thank you ma'am!—he fucks her to pieces! Whole bed board was shot. It was amazing.[12]

THE JUDGE: Where'd you say you heard all this, pal?

WILLY NUTLEY: Where else? Through my ears! Ain't like you hear through your nose, Your Honor. Plus, there's this one spot between their house and mine that's all boarded up; so, I just busted out one of the planks—I *do* own both properties, you know—and, from there, you can get a clear shot of the whole shebang. Everything I told you here today. [The *hole* story.]

THE JUDGE: Oh, you're quite the storyteller, all right.

The parties may approach.

JUDY: And this party's over! I rest my case.

So? What's the disposition? Win, lose, or drawn and quartered? Do we prevail here or what?

THE JUDGE: Who needs lawyers anyway? This was an open-and-shut case.

MARION: [{*To Colin*} Yeah! What do you think o' *dis* position?]

[*To the Judge*] Um, what's the upshot?

THE JUDGE: Order in the court and shut up! In the matter before us, the Court finds Colin guilty. He is in the wrong and, for that, he shall make reparations in the form of a hefty fine, notwithstanding that wrong-headed defense he mounted about having promised nothing to maid Marion here.

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Therefore, in addition to the usual alms-giving, the Court orders restitution in the amount of one hundred dollars. So ordered! And that's that. I'll entertain no further arguments.

I further sentence him to get down on bended knee before Marion and, like a good little penitent, beg her mercy and forgiveness.

[*To Colin*] Down on one knee, I said! Understand?

And furthermore, he shall cover court costs as well, if he's to have a prayer, that is, of getting out of jail. [*He motions for payment.*] Payable immediately.

[*To the audience*] I said nobody leaves without paying up.

JUDY: [*To Colin*] So, dogmeat? How's that whole seduction thing working out for you now?

THE JUDGE: Not so fast because, before he makes one more move, I further sentence him forthwith to—drumroll, please!—be paraded through the streets all the way to her church, where, to the sounds of flutes and drums and tambourines and accordions, he shall atone! He shall, devotedly and with all due speed, marry Marion without further ado.

There's your upshot right there, sweetheart, and your consolation prize too.

That is my ruling. Case closed.

JUDY: Your Honor is wise. God bless you, sir. Have a good day.

COLIN: Shut up! This is fraud—*female* fraud!—and she can stuff a sock in that big fat trap o' hers. Or a great big stinky dog turd!

You really got me now.©

WILLY NUTLEY: Just suck it up, kid, and take it like a man. Enjoy the ride.

COLIN: *You* suck it! To the gallows with you, Nutley, [and nuts to you]! You're the one who did this to me.

WILLY NUTLEY: So, what did you have to go and do her like that for anyhow?

[*Imitating the Judge's voice, he turns to the audience.*] Here's the thing, gentlemen:

Any Tom, Dick, or Colin can enter into a contract, be it orally or in writing or witnessed by a third party. But he must keep his word because, before you know it, we're all gonna find ourselves standing before the ultimate Supreme Court on that great day of reckoning, when all are summoned to appear and when, in all His glory, He shall judge the living and the dead. [*Judicare, judicare! Vivos et mortuos!*] And he who shall have been found to be a liar [and a perjurer] shall be judged for his

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sins. One has no other choice, therefore, but to be honest, faithful, steadfast, and true to one's word.

[Ladies and Gentlemen, we hold these truths to be self-evident.] Nor do we deem that anything we've said here today requires further explanation or interpretation—[and that goes for you too, English majors! Unless you're thinkin' the censor made me say all this crap! And, by the by:]

Should anyone take offense at this ruling—or if it bums you out even in the slightest, folks—well, what can I say? I don't get it. [The Witness is excused.]

Therefore, let us pray the Everlasting Father that he grant us eternal *piece*. [And His kingdom shall have no end. But *we* do, and so does this farce!]

Bye-bye for now, folks, that's the show!
How 'bout a song before we go?

[Possible closing music.][13]
The End

NOTES

1. See, e.g., *RF,* 2: 78–80; and *SFQS*, "Préf." at https://sottiesetfarces.wordpress.com/2019/07/14/le-tesmoing/#sdendnote13anc. I am indebted to both Thierry Martin and Mario Longtin for thinking through the textual alterations with me. I'll use the term *remanieur* (someone who "reworks" or "rehandles") in order to preserve some of the ambiguity related to his irrecuperable intent.

2. For those consulting the digitized *RFMSJ:* the text begins on 2: 6, missing the first fourteen lines.

3. For France, see Skoda, *Medieval Cruelty*, 69–74; and for Spain, Barahona's *Sex Crimes*, esp. "Coercion, Violence, and Subordination" (chap. 3) and "Litigating Honour/Dishonour" (chap. 5).

4. *Esplouree* (2: 9) is also the name of one of the sisters in *Immaculate Deception* from the selfsame *RLV* (#38; *ID*, #12).

5. *Tesmoing, parlés sans plus de plaist.* / ~~*Vous jurrez par la Passion / De Dieu, et la salvation / Ou dannation de vostre âme / (Ou vous puissez estre soublz lame / Dedens quatre jours enfouy), / Que vous me direz vray?*~~ Here, the *remanieur* has not only crossed out some lines: he has rewritten the last two like so: *Vous soyez tout vif enfouy / Me direz vous pas vray?* (fol. 105v; 2: 11). In *RFMSJ*, the cuts remain; Martin restores them in *SFQS* (vv. 118–24).

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6. *Ouy / ~~L'Oficial, le Juge / Monsieur, je ne suys pas si habille~~* (fol. 106r; *SFQS*, vv. 123–25): here the deletion also resolves the otherwise orphaned rhyme with *habille.*

7. The *remanieur* retains the versification but deletes an intolerable rhyme with *esglise: Monsieur, monsieur, la chosse est grande*: / *~~Il y fault de plus loing venir. / J'ey veu c'on faisoyt convenir / Tout le monde en Court de l'Église~~* (fol. 106v; *SFQS*, vv. 171–74). We saw one of these same lines in #5, *Who's Your Daddy?*, sc. 2 about another thingy: *que vostre chose est grande!* as Johnny fumbles for the word for "blotter" (*ATF*, 1: 356).

8. On fol. 107v, a correction has been made, possibly by the copyist: in *Mon amy*, *~~parle~~ à propos*, someone has substituted *respons*, seemingly for the poetic feet.

9. For *le monde est crû de [.X.] foys / Plus grand qu'il n'estoyt de mon temps* (2: 17), Martin sees an allusion to the discovery of America and corrects "seven times" to "ten times" per *RLV*, fol. 107v. (*SFQS*, note 115).

10. *Quans escus, quand testons ou soublz / Luy baila il?* (2: 18). Here's the reference to the silver *teston*, worth about ten *sous* (above, "ABT," § "Money, Math").

11. With its ellipsis of agency, this line is highly ambiguous at the most crucial moment: *Toute foys en fin le voulust. / Faist-il pas?* (2: 19). It could mean: *he* wanted to, *she* wanted to, *she* wanted *it*, she wanted *him*, or she wanted him to.

12. *"[H]uy, huy : formage,"* / Contrefaisant la basse voix. / *"Un formage, par saincte croix! / Pour un fourmage n'en feray / Un coup, tant que vive seray," / Dict-elle. Se voyant Colin / Se laisa mener en belin / Et bender tout à son aise* (2: 19). And I'm with Martin, by the way, that *contrefaisant la basse voix* might well have been a mistakenly interwoven stage direction (*SFQS*, note 128). For Tissier, this passage is about the customary pre-marital gifting and the insufficiency of cheese for that purpose (*RF*, 121n); for Martin, it's about giving a cheese *instead* of marrying (*SFQS*, note 127). I believe it's both more brilliant *and* more complicated as wordplay on *formariage*, i.e., a marital contract between unequal parties. Also, when Colin sticks "Geoffrey" in the *bisacq*, this sounds like the sex advice of *Slick Brother Willy* regarding the vaginal mount (*foulando in cali-bistris*; *ID*, #11). Compare also with Margot's tryst with a pilgrim in *Blue Confessions* (*ID*, #2).

13. I've amplified this moralizing with the Nicene Creed or *credo* so that our farce can reclaim some of its theological territory. For music, perhaps something along the lines of "You Really Got Me."© Here is the original closing in Middle French (2: 22–23):

LE TESMOING

Messieurs, Colin qui veult promectre,
Soyt par foy, par tesmoingtz ou lestre,
Y doibt sa parolle tenir
Car on doibt quelque jour venir
Devant le très souverain Juge,
Qui [les] vis & trespassés juge.
Et qui menteur trouvé sera,
Pour ses meffaictz le jugera.
Il n'est donc qu'estre véritable

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Et, en foy, très constant & stable.
Nous ne pensons avoir dict chosse
Où auxcuns puissent faire glosse.
Sy on s'en sent piqué ou poinct,
Messieurs, on ne l'entendra poinct,
Mais prions le Dieu supernel
Vous donner repos éternel.
En prenant congé de ce lieu,
Une chanson pour dire a Dieu.

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11.

The Trial of Johnny Slowpoke

[Jehan de Lagny]

CAST OF CHARACTERS

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE (Jehan de Lagny/Le Badin)
FATHER JOHN "CUP-AND-BALL" JOHNSON, Esquire (Mes[s]ire Jehan [Virelinquin])
SCAFFOLDIA (Trétaulde)
OLIVE (Olyve)
PERRETTE-COME-EARLY (Pérete Venés-Tost)
and the JUDGE (Le Juge)
[The COURT RECORDER (Le Greffier)]

PRODUCTION NOTES

Necessitating quite a bit of unpacking, if only for our comprehension of its dramatis personae, is the anonymous *Farce Joyeuse à sis personnages, c'est asavoir: Jehan de Lagny, badin, Mesire Jehan, Trétaulde, Olive, Pérete Venés-tost et le Juge* (*RLV*, #31; fols. 165v–172v). Better known as *Jehan de Lagny*, it was first published as the eighth play of *RFMSJ*, vol. 2 (again, not paginated continuously and with no verse numbers). At 417 verses in mostly octosyllabic couplets, it dates from sometime after 1515, as may be minimally induced from an explicit allusion to the reign of King Francis I, who ruled from 1515 to 1547 (2: 20; *SFQS*, Préf.). It was later reedited by Martin: https://sottiesetfarces.wordpress.com/2019/07/25/jehan-de-lagny/; and summarized by both Petit de Julleville (*RTC*, 150) and Faivre (*Répertoire*, 212–13). I know of no translation into English or any modern vernacular, which might well have something to do with the many errors, dropped lines, and orphaned verses of the *RLV* text (*SFQS*, Préf.). Indeed, the first error seemingly occurs as early as the title: in this farce "for six characters" (*à sis personnages*), Scene 5 features *seven* char-

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acters on stage (fol. 172r). Among them is that fixture of legal proceedings, the "Court Recorder" (Le Greffier), who utters one line (2: 29–30) and whom I've restored to the Cast of Characters. After all, his presence is not uncommon in this repertoire, even when, as in the *Farce of the Fart*, he is a nonspeaking character (*FF*, 417n29). For his own part, however, Martin is so convinced that the Greffier's brief intervention is misattributed that he reassigns it to Olive. "It is inconceivable," he avers, "that a new character, absent from the initial cast list, is introduced for the purpose of declaiming four verses" (*SFQS*, note 182).[1] I'm not so sure. And neither is Mario Longtin, who brilliantly hypothesized in our conversation that six actors could plausibly have been destined to play seven characters in a *Recueil* apparently organized by the number of actors required (Doudet and Longtin, "*Recueil de Rouen*, 301; above "ABT," § "Editions").

Like *Witless Protection* (#10), *Johnny Slowpoke* could have erupted straight off the pages of Ovid, Seneca (*Controversiae*), or the local crime blotter, as it were. Recall that the lawyerly minds of schoolboys had been steeped in such appalling narratives as "The Man Who Raped Two Girls on a Single Night," the conundrum being what to do when "one demands his death, the other marriage" (*Controversiae*, 1: 5; Woods, "Rape," 67). A version of that question dogs one "John of Lagny," scripted throughout the original as "The Fool" (Le Badin), but whose full name is heard so constantly, it's as if his mom is mad at him. As thrice the criminal that Colin Beefcake was in *Witless Protection*, Johnny has failed to follow through on not one but three promises of marriage to three different women (Perrette, Olive, and Trétaulde). That procrastination, moreover, is part of the meaning of his moniker. To be a "Jehan de Lagny" was to be a shilly-shallier, a dawdler, and a "Johnny-*not*-on-the-spot" (*Voylà un bon Jehan de Lagny*; *Jehan de Lagny, qui n'a point de haste; Il est des gens de Lagny, il n'a pas haste* [*SFQS*, Préf.]). The nickname apparently harks back to the alleged dawdling of Jean sans Peur (1371–1419), the ruler of the powerful Burgundian state and a key figure in the fight against the Armagnacs during the Hundred Years' War. Undecided in 1416 as to his next military move, the historical Jean had taken up lengthy residence in Lagny-sur-Marne, some twenty-two miles east of Paris.[2] Songs were sung about his flaws too, as they will be in our play: bawdy *chansons gaillardes*, of which Jacques de Berchem published one in 1540 (*SFQS*, Préf.; *MFST*, 268).

And yet, for all the song and dance, *Johnny Slowpoke* paints a tragic picture of the lives of three women, probably *filles de joie* for whom there is no joy. Nor is their situation apt to elicit giggles from a twenty-first-century spectator faced with the daily mockery they endure at the hands of the man who

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wronged them. Certainly, there can be nothing amusing about "a rapist of girls, an abuser, a seducer, a gossip, a braggard, a liar" (*un violleur de filles, / Un abuseur, un séducteur, / Un babillard, vanteur, menteur* [2: 21]). To add insult to injury, their only recourse lies with a lawyer of highly questionable repute—another John or *john*—who proposes to come to their aid with a series of complaints, summonses, and arrest warrants (*adjourner à ban* [2: 10], *lestre de prinse* [2: 18], *licence*, *plaincte formelle* [2: 19], *procuration* [2: 20], etc.). The Pathelinesque Father Jean Virelinquin is spicy (*virolle*), twisty (*virer*), tipsy (*virlin* = a wine measure), light on his feet (*vireli* = a dance), in it for the money shot (*virlan* = a unit of Flemish currency), dick-like (*virebrequin* = penis [*SFQS*, note 35]), and ballsy, which turns out to be highly significant in that a *virolet* is also a testicle. *Ergo*, John Johnson is a long-dong screwball who talks a good game of being in it for the right reasons. He's a regular Lady Mercy from Arnoul Gréban's celestial court, all right, pleading the case of humankind (2: 22; *ROMD*, 174–82). But, in the end, this unethical dick of a drunk has his hand in so many pots that even the Judge wonders about conflicts of interest. How can John possibly be a cop, a marshal, a priest, a prosecutor, *and* a lawyer (*Comment il est sergent & prestre, / Et procureur & advocat!* [2: 22]). I've spotlighted some of that breadth, by the way, by having each female client address him variously as "Counselor" (Olive), "Papa John" (Perrette), and "Father" (Trétaulde). Additionally, I've drawn on a final connotation of his name to dub him "Father John 'Cup-and-Ball' Johnson." It turns out that, in Morvan dialect, a *virebeurquin* or *vilebrequin* was not only a farce-appropriate, hole-piercing tool that served as a kind of manual drill: *vireboquet* also denoted the child's game of *bilboquet*, today's "cup-and-ball." You get the picture. Ball on a string, ball in cup, fill that hole: he knows the drill. So, let's watch and see if this john-of-all-trades screws up when he takes up the women's cause.

As for the complainants, we've met dimwitted Pérete Venés-Tost before in *Brother Fillerup*, where she was the recipient of a prescription for rough sex (*RLV*, #53; *ID*, #6). Herself the subject of a contemporaneous song published in 1547 (*SFQS*, note 5), Perrette-Come-Early—"Pebbles?"—is called "Pérete la Pétaulde" at one point (2: 25). Could this "Fart-Ass" be a forerunner to Molière's own "kangaroo court" (*la cour du roi Pétaud*)?

One of her frenemies is "Olive," a prostitute in Coquillart (*SFQS*, note 4), whose slightly more elegant speech might signal a higher-class call girl. She is perhaps somewhat older—or at least more experienced—as implied by her apparent need to have "her cunt adjusted" (per another medieval song about a life spent getting "doubly fucked over" [the *double enfouture* of 2: 29; *SFQS*, notes 27, 175, 176]). You could also imagine her as Spanish in honor of Lope de

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Rueda's sixteenth-century romp, *The Troublesome Olives* (*Medieval Interludes*, ed. Denny, 61–70).

Last but in no way least, the third litigant is a pushy woman of substance and size. It is she who entraps Slowpoke *en ruze* (2: 15), and more unusually, it is she who delivers the final *envoi*, complete with an aphorism attributed to the great forensic rhetorician Antoine Loisel (1536–1617). "Crazy is the judge who rules in haste," it goes—*De fol juge brèfve sentence* (2: 31)—which was likewise a principle of customary law. According to Nicolas Kiès, the adage may be understood as "wise is the judge who listens and judges later because a rapid sentence comes from a foolish judge" (*Sage est le juge qui escoute, & tard juge; car de fol juge, briefve sentence*) (*SFQS*, note 196; Kiès; below, note 15). Our civil Judge is already fool enough, thank you very much, to be sitting in judgment on a priest, which would not be his bailiwick. Unless, of course. . . . Surely, Johnny can't be a priest, can he? (You decide.) In any event, the third woman sports a name so bizarre that even her attorney does a double take. She is "all-the-way" *Trétaulde*—sounds like *trestot* or *trestout*—and she might be a madam, as in the neighboring *Trois Brus et deulx Hermites* (*RLV*, #37; *SFQS*, note 157). But I've gone another way because a *trétaud* signified the scaffolding for both public theater and public executions. She shall be—not "Gibbety," not "Jillotine"—but, with a tip of the hat to Michel Foucault's "spectacle of the scaffold," "Scaffoldia."[3] Ultimately, when it comes to this triumvirate—*triumfeminate?*—high camp is the only way to go.

I won't spoil here one of farce's most shocking denouements ever, as unenforceable as it is illegal (*SFQS*, Préf). Jump ahead, if you must, to note 15; but suffice it to say for now that the atmosphere is all Rouen, all Carnival, all Mardi Gras, all mock trial (*grand conseil* [2: 23]), and all fools all the time.[4] Seriously. What else would explain the utter lack of legal and dramatic verisimilitude as characters magically appear at the mere mention of their names (*Répertoire*, 213)? Get ready, then, for a verdict that makes for one screwball comedy. Literally.

Sets, Costumes, or Props

As in *The Washtub* (#3), we bear witness to the drafting of a legal document, facilitated by Father Johnson's escritoire—a prop shared with *Who's Your Daddy?* (#5), and which handily dangles from his belt (*SFQS*, note 50). Most of the play's accoutrements are of the legal variety: appropriate robes for judges or attorneys, plus gavels, papers, quills, and the like. Slowpoke should have a purse and a codpiece—dress him up like a giant catfish?—and, for the

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women, try a girls-band vibe suitable for Mardi Gras, a bit like that of Biddy and the Pilgrimettes of *Holy Deadlock* (*HD*, #7). Listen, girls. . . .

Scholarly References to Copyrighted Materials (in order of appearance and indicated by © within the text)

"Hunting High and Low." By Pal Waaktaar. BMI Work #598866.
"Come and Get It." By Paul McCartney. ASCAP Work ID: 330175798.
"We Are Family." By Bernard Edwards and Nile Gregory Rodgers. BMI Work #1612850.
"It's May." By Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe. Music Theatre International. https://www.mtishows.com/camelot
"I'm Gonna Make You Mine." By Tony Romeo. BMI Work #656191.
"Whatever Will Be Will Be." ["*Que Sera Sera*."] By Jay Livingston and Raymond Evans. ASCAP Work ID: 530045880.
"Bad to the Bone." By George Thorogood. BMI Work #80431.
"Spinning Wheel." By Thomas David Clayton. BMI Work #1396227.
"Poor, Poor Pitiful Me." By Warren Zevon. BMI Work #1189347.
"She's Come Undone." By Randy Bachmann. BMI Work #1572184.

[SCENE 1]

[The time: around Mardi Gras or Carnival in Rouen. Against a backdrop of thick forests, a public square teems with local color: favorite watering holes, houses of ill repute, a seedy tennis court, etc.[5]*]*
Enter Scaffoldia, holding a stick in her hand.
SCAFFOLDIA, [*singing*]:

Been hunting Johnny high and low:©
that Slowpoke's caused me agony.
There's no end to the lengths I'll go.
Been hunting Johnny high and low—©
He'll hang like Enguerrand, you know?—
Where is he? Ma[r]gny? Troyes? *Paree*?
Been hunting Johnny high and low:©
that Slowpoke's caused me agony.[6]

PERRETTE: Me too! He tricked me too. Let's go! Got Johnny Slowpoke in my sights. I'll get my hands on him, all right, and, when I do, I'll lay him low!
[Wait! Who the hell is Enguerrand?]

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Figure 8. The hanging of Enguerrand de Marigny. From the *Chroniques de France ou de St. Denis,* BL Royal MS 20 C vii f. 51. WikiMedia. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Enguerrand_de_Marigny_death.jpg

OLIVE: Me three! That cheat, Johnny Slowpoke, broke his promise to me as well. Oh, Lord: let's go and search his joint. We'll send the hangman to his home!

SCAFFOLDIA:

Been hunting Johnny high and low:©
that Slowpoke's caused me agony.[7]

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PERRETTE: You go, girl! And, say: Whereabouts was it he screwed *you* over? I could tell just by lookin' at you that he had you over a barrel too.

[And, hello! Enguerrand? Who is that?]

SCAFFOLDIA: He trips me, I fall over backwards, and he's all: "Hey, you! Good-time gallows! Not so fast there, fatso. [Betcha dollars to doughnut holes] you're hammered again, and I'll be having my fill of every last inch of you!"

[*To Perrette*] Wait. Who are you?

PERRETTE: Who, me? Perrette-Come-Early, [at your service. {*To the audience*} Remember me from *Brother Fillerup*?]

SCAFFOLDIA: Perrette, my sister! The one from the song? The girl on the streets? I almost died when—. It was just the other weekend, I heard some fool singing about you with one of his dumbass pals—lowdown, dirty, slime-doggie—goin': "Hey, Perrette-Come-Early! If you want it, here it is, come and get it!© I got just the thingy for you right here." And, then, damn fool goes for a show-and-tell! Says he's got a great big boner.

You know what I'm talkin' about, don'tcha, sister?

PERRETTE: Yeah, that was me. [But is somebody gonna tell me who Enguerrand is or what?]

OLIVE: [Enguerrand de Marigny, of course. {*Silence*}

Lord High Chamberlain to Philip the Fair? Hanged right here in Normandy for bribery in 1315? The O.J. trial of its day—? Don't you people know anything?]

And God help that Johnny-*not*-on-the-Spot if we find him first, I swear! This is war. May he never know a moment's peace till death do us part.

SCAFFOLDIA: And *you* are?

OLIVE: Who, me? I'm Olive.

SCAFFOLDIA: Wait. Aren't you the one he grabbed by the pussy? They're singing about you too! On the streets, in the fields, wherever. It's practically a nursery rhyme. [*She sings.*]

That's your name on everybody's lips, same as ours.

PERRETTE: I pray the Lord on bended knee: let's hunt him down like the dog he is. Drag my name through the mud, is it? Damned if I don't make him pay!

OLIVE: That's Johnny Slowpoke for you.

SCAFFOLDIA: And that reputation of his is toast.

[*Aside*] Hers too.

And is he ever gonna get it this time! But on one condition and one condition alone. Here's what we're gonna do. . . .

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PERRETTE: So? What is it?

SCAFFOLDIA: [Where? Oh! What it *is*!] Shut up and I'll tell you.

We're gonna hold our own trial right here, see? A regular tribunal! A synod, you know? We'll get some brother out there—there's gotta be a literate priest around here somewhere—to help us file suit against that lying pervert, Johnny Slowpoke.

OLIVE: I've got just the man for the job! Father John "Cup-and-Ball" Johnson, Esquire. Shall I go tell him to come right away and speak with you?

PERRETTE: Right away is right. The Perrette-Come-Early-Bird catches the worm!

SCAFFOLDIA: What *she* said! *Early*, not late. Now, step on it!

[SCENE 2]

[Enter Father John.]

OLIVE: Oh. My—. There he is, heaven-sent by God Himself!

Father John, God give you joy and whatever your heart desires. Are you well?

FATHER JOHNSON: If I were any better, I'd be illegal.

SCAFFOLDIA: God give you joy, Father Johnson, [how's it hangin'?]

FATHER JOHNSON: Ready, aim—. [And happy Mardi Gras to you too there, fatso!] This is some fine troupe o' good-time gals we got here. A real whore-corps.

PERRETTE: God give you joy, Papa John, and whatever your heart desires.

SCAFFOLDIA: And listen up, 'cause I've got something to tell you that's as true as the day is long, John. Help us out with a little good counsel, wouldya? There'll be a little something in it for you too for your trouble.

FATHER JOHNSON: Proceed.

PERRETTE: So, here's the thing: we been huntin' Johnny Slowpoke high and low©—he should burn to a crisp at the stake or—damn!—just get outta Dodge! Hang him high, I say! And you can put *that* on his tombstone.

FATHER JOHNSON: [What does she think this is, the Wild West?]

I'll have you know, Madam, that you must swear out a complaint, get a summons issued, and have the town crier serve him publicly for the whole parish to hear. That way, he gets what's coming to him and, believe me, it's gonna hurt.

What do you say we put a gossip's bridle on him, ladies? [You can *brank* me later.]

[{*To the audience*} I got a million of 'em folks! Ya hear the one about the Belgian hooker? Always had some Flem in her throat?][8]

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OLIVE: And thank you, Mister "Cup-and-Ball" Johnson. We're ever so beholden to you, Counselor.

FATHER JOHNSON: That prick can run, but he can't hide! We'll find him if it's the last thing we do. God willing, of course.

SCAFFOLDIA: So, write it up already. You gonna depose us here or what?

[*Aside to Father Johnson*] And make sure you say that *I'm* the one with the prior claim and such who's bringing the suit against him. As opposed to, say, some random slut.

Monsieur writes:

[FATHER JOHNSON]: And you are? Your name, Madam!

SCAFFOLDIA: They call me Scaffoldia.

FATHER JOHNSON: Scaffoldia? [As in "The Spectacle of the Scaffoldia?"] Jesus of Nazareth!

SCAFFOLDIA: And be sure to dot them *i*'s and cross them *t*'s 'cause [he's not getting off on some technicality!] And that good-for-nothing lowlife better show.

PERRETTE: Hello! Papa Long-Dong! Put that *I'm* the one who's lookin' for him! What if I was to lure him over to my place and trap him? And then, it's off to the pokey with him!

[*Father Johnson looks at her quizzically.*] The name's Perrette—don't wear it out!—and Perrette-Come-Early says to the stake with him! Him and his whole gang ain't worth the wood it would take to burn 'em!

FATHER JOHNSON: [*Struggling with the dictation*] Not so fast there, Madam, I'm just getting to that last part.

OLIVE: Yoo-hoo, Counselor? Oh, Johnson? Don't forget to—. First, just let me state for the record:© he's as dumb as a bag o' hammers! Running around cheating on all those girls. If we could only manage to catch him in the act. . . . He won't have the last laugh this time!

FATHER JOHNSON: Ladies, ladies [{*sotto voce*} of the evening!]

[*To Scaffoldia*] And you there, Iron Maiden! He won't be getting away with a thing, so long as I hold your Power of Attorney, the better to intervene on your behalf.

[He tenders documents for the women to sign. They ignore him.]

SCAFFOLDIA: So, serve your warrant already! Put a lien on those assets. At *my* request.

PERRETTE: Mine too.

FATHER JOHNSON: [*He points to his noggin.*] Got it all up here. A ball in the cup is worth two in your bush.

OLIVE: [Mine three,] Counselor Johnson, my brother. Don't forget to put me in there too.

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FATHER JOHNSON: Of course not. Sign right here on the dotted line, ladies, and *laissez faire*. Just leave it all to me.

[The women sign. Or don't.]

[SCENE 3]

Enter the Fool, singing.

[JOHNNY SLOWPOKE]: Tra-la, it's May![©] So lovingly do I present to you my heart—the whole of me, not just a part—in May, the time of youth and growth.[9]

SCAFFOLDIA: That's Johnny Slowpoke I just heard!, and that's the Gospel truth!

[{*Sotto voce*} And this ain't *Camelot* either, pal. *Came a lot*. Came a little. Came all over the place.]

I implore you, Father Johnson: see that he's punished, please, if at all possible.

FATHER JOHNSON: I'm on the case! We'll use every trick in the book.[©] Now, let's have one of you head on over there and distract him. Go on. Go sweet-talk him—really chat him up!—and I'll listen in at a distance. That way, I can serve as your witness too: better than any twelve men and true.

PERRETTE: From your lips to God's ear! And don't forget we'll be makin' it worth your while too. Could be as much as four hundred in it for you. Maybe more.

[*Aside*] Thank-yous, that is.

[Exit Father Johnson to find a discreet spot from which to eavesdrop and from which vantage point he will provide ex parte commentary throughout the next scene.[10]*]*

[SCENE 4]

[As the women vie physically for the role of entrapper, Johnny Slowpoke draws near. Scaffoldia is the apparent victor of the mimed competition; so, Olive and Perrette exit, but only temporarily.]

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: In the name of Saint Johnson and good old Saint Ned of Rouen! I haven't seen me a threesome so fit for duty since the last time I played this town! Not since the Feast of the Holy Innocents, I swear! [People, people! That would be December 28th: All Fools' Day, when jokers one and all, high and low come out and play!]

Over there! That's some gaggle o' good-time gals—*women*—and, talk about your feast days! Let's eat, drink, and be—. [Ladies and Gentlemen,

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I give you] Scaffoldia, Perrette, and Olive! So, once more unto the breach, dear friends, because—Holy fuckin' Trinity!—I'll be makin' my way over there *post haste*—lickety-split—to make nice.

No, wait. Easy does it. Nice and slowpoke, that's the way to do it. And you better believe I don't need no written instrument to snatch me up some o' that!

SCAFFOLDIA *from behind*: [*Sotto voce*] You stay the hell outta my snatch, buster, I'd rather hang! And let them show me no mercy.

PERRETTE: [*Returning*] Not me. Nope.

OLIVE: [*Returning*] Me neither. Not me.

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: May God be with you, babes-times-three!

SCAFFOLDIA, *playing along:* [*She makes the sign of the cross.*] Also with you, Johnny Slowpoke!

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: How's tricks?

PERRETTE: God, tricks are fine by me.

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: May God be with you, babes-times-three! You all alone here?

OLIVE: As you see.

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: I do. I see. Ecstatically. May God be with you babes-times-three!

ALL THREE TOGETHER: Also with you, Johnny Slowpoke!

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: I swear, it's like I'm pricked by Love's arrows! That's how ecstatic I am at the mere sight of you carefree jolly gals.

SCAFFOLDIA: "Love," my ass! You're always pricked by Love's something or other. And you ain't snatchin' nothing off me ever again.

[*Sotto voce*] You *will*, however, pay for ruining my reputation and defaming my good name, so help me God!

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: [*Brandishing a purse*] Sure thing, babe. Pay to play! My reputation does precede me in these here parts.

Feeling a little blue? Something got you down? Damned if I'm not all over that with a good slow poke. Just say the word and it's yours: whatever you want in this whole wide world. Anything. Your wish is my command.

SCAFFOLDIA: If you'd be good enough to repeat that promise you made to me that time. It was our little secret and everything, I know, but if you could just refresh my memory.

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: I promised—and do promise anew—to marry you. Whenever.

FATHER JOHNSON: And . . . gotcha! There it is already! [The money shot!] In

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the name of Saint Johnson, I won't be forgetting that little admission any time soon.

PERRETTE: [*Rushing Johnny*] And when, pray tell, will you be making an honest woman outta *me*?

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: Like for Scaffoldia. Whenever.

OLIVE: [*Rushing Johnny*] And what about me?

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: What *about* you? Whenever.

SCAFFOLDIA: I don't care if it costs me thirty bucks. Either I'm gonna get you or you're gonna get me!

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: Sure thing. But, for now, let's go off someplace and seal the deal. How's about a nice commemorative pop for old times' sake? We're gonna party!

FATHER JOHNSON: [*Erupting from his hiding place*] And, my, my, my! Whoever do we have here? Why, if it isn't the bigamist-to-be and future adulterer [in the flesh]! The very one named right here in my arrest warrant!

Gotcha! On the King's authority, I'm taking you into custody, sir, and I'll be manumitting you myself to His Honor, the Judge. You're coming with me!

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: [Keep your *manumitts* to yourself!] Just what kind of transgressor do you take me for anyway?

What? You're a marshal now? Since when are you an Officer of the Court? Or of the King? [Talk about your conflicts of interest! What's next? Judge and jury?]

[SCENE 5]

[From the wings, enter the Judge, initially unseen by the others. He moves slowly through town and eventually overhears their conversation.]

FATHER JOHNSON: [*Very loudly*] I swear to God, you're coming with me, and I'll swear it again!

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE *shakes his head*: In the name of all that's—. Hold on there, man! I know my rights. I've got a brain up here too, you know. What are you, drunk? You think you can just seize me against my will and haul me off to prison? Not by a long shot, Johnson. Now butt the hell out!

FATHER JOHNSON: Them's fightin' words! Bitch and moan all you want, but you're comin' with me and that's final.

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: The hell you say, boy! You're lying through your teeth!

FATHER JOHNSON: Liar, liar pants on fire! I'll show *you* who the hell's in

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charge around here! I got me a warrant here and everything to take you into custody.

THE JUDGE: What's this? Could it be . . . blasphemy? That's some heated argument! And the source of this dispute? Whatever could it be that's making their blood boil? I'd best go find out because nobody gets away with taking the name of *my* Lord in vain! Not without doing hard time, they don't! Not even friends and family. It's bread and water for them too! And only if I'm nice about the bread. Lock them up, I say, and throw away the key!

[Lock them up! Lock them up!]

[The two Johns finally notice the Judge.]

FATHER JOHNSON: Behold, sir, this delinquent—hotheaded crook that he is—who is resisting arrest! I hold a sworn complaint against him but he refuses to comply with Your Honor's authority.

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: May it please the Court: he sought to seize me in a public place, Your Honor—in mixed company, no less—and without so much as reading me my rights.

[Got bad Miranda there, didn't I, ladies?]

THE JUDGE: I understood not one word of that. [And who is this "Miranda?"]

[*To Father John*] What do you want from him? Tell me.

FATHER JOHNSON: Gladly, Your Honor. I was just getting to that.

May it please the Court: examine these "ladies." I shall then produce documentation for you in the form of their sworn complaints, along with their Powers of Attorney, which I have procured.

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: [*Procured!* That's the word for it right there!] And, by the way: I invoke! I have the right to be represented by counsel. I have the right to hear the charges brought against me. [I have the right to cross-examine my accusers. I have the right to—.]

THE JUDGE: Remain silent! [Order in the court!] All in good time, my friend. You'll have your opportunity to make an opening statement, I assure you.

FATHER JOHNSON *reads*: "By the Grace of God and, in the name of Francis, King of France," *et cetera, [et cetera]*. . . .

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: *Qui sera sera*,© pal, and, if I might interject, Your Honor: I'll be asking for court costs too. Put a lien on his house, sir, if he can't pony up! [Wait. What house?] Or you can string him up by the—. At the very least, we can suspend these proceedings. I request a continuance.

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THE JUDGE: And you'll have your chance, I said. A little patience, my friend, it's a virtue. Just you wait and see if things don't go your way.

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: [*To Father Johnson*] I catch you at it again, you better watch your back, boy—and sooner than you think.

FATHER JOHNSON: First, we have here Scaffoldia—not bad for a fat chick, right?—along with Perrette-Come-Early and Olive, all of whom have sworn out a complaint against Johnny Slowpoke. They request discipline and punishment, Your Honor, because he's a rapist, an abuser, a seducer, a liar, a showoff, a poser, and a fast-talking con artist, sir, who promises to marry them and, then, he keeps right on abusing them. Rubs their noses in it every single day like it's some kind of farce.

[*He brandishes his papers and reads aloud.*] "In seeking redress through the courts and, for purposes of this inquest, we do hereby retain and do grant our limited Power of Attorney to . . . the all-knowing, the all-seeing, that whirling dervish of a swami of the legal arts, that practitioner *and* theorist *par excellence* of all that's piled higher and deeper—[*with a nod toward Scaffoldia*]—and *fatter*: Father John 'Cup-and-Ball' Johnson, Esquire." At your service.

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: Objection, Your Honor! Esquire, my ass! [What? He's been to law school in the last five minutes?] Where does he get off posing as a marshal and a priest and a prosecutor *and* a lawyer?

Run along now, Father Dervish. Go whirl yourself off to church and sing the *Magnificat*. And shut up!

FATHER JOHNSON: He abused these girls, Your Honor, and it's a crying shame. I feel for them, I really do.

SCAFFOLDIA: He's bad, Your Honor, b-b-b-bad to the bone!© Did me just like that [and I'll get a piece of him if it's the last thing I do.]

PERRETTE: Me too.

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: Who, me? I hereby serve notice that, should I be denied due process, I'll see you in—. Got a little something goin' on these days, maybe you've heard of it? It's called the Court of Appeals? And, hey! There's always moot court.

THE JUDGE: You there, females! Did he apply any undue pressure or coerce you in any way?

THE WOMEN *together*: Yes, yes, yes!

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: Nuh-uh. No way!

FATHER JOHNSON: Way, Your Honor, way!—I swear!—and I've got the *testic*—the *testimony*—to prove it. [See here? I hold their proxy.]

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: Of course, you hold their proxy, you damn parasite!

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Jesus H. Christ! You're their pimp! You, Mister *Procurer*, are the *proxenete* of all three of 'em. And I can prove it.

SCAFFOLDIA: I call first dibs, Your Honor! I shall be retaining Johnny Slowpoke for my lawfully wedded spouse.

PERRETTE-COME-EARLY: Not if I beat you to it!

OLIVE: And not if I get there first!

THE JUDGE: In the name of our living God—[not that I'd ever take the name of the Lord in vain, mind you]—I can't make heads or tails of a single word of this case.

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: And I, Your Honor, mean to prosecute this dirty trickster—lowdown, underhanded deadbeat that he is—to the fullest extent of the law. Why, there's more buzz on the street about Mister Father "Long-Arm-of-the-Law" Johnson over there than I've ever had my whole life. [At the very least, Your Honor, it's trademark infringement,] and I *will* be seeking damages.

THE JUDGE: Have you nothing probative to offer? I have no evidence before me to that effect.

FATHER JOHNSON: Surely, Your Honor will not allow this shmuck to besmirch my good name.

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: He can go besmirch himself, Your Honor. I submit that he's an apostate—and a heretic!—and these ladies here will testify to that.

FATHER JOHNSON: Your Honor, I further submit that *he*'s the one who wants to seduce every woman out there, jointly and severally.

THE JUDGE: Know what? Let's see what you've got.

[Father Johnson rifles through his papers at some length.]

[This is no time for a pregnant pause, man.] This is a courtroom, and I'm in another one tomorrow. Now, get on with it, Counselor, and prove your case. Today! Proceed.

FATHER JOHNSON *presents his evidence*: I have here the Power of Attorney of Olive and Scaffoldia and Perrette Fart-Ass.

[*He gestures to the women that payment is expected.*] As if I'd take on *her* sorry ass *pro bono*.

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE *presents his evidence*: [Objection, Your Honor! Abuse of process!] He means to transform Your Honor's illustrious venue into a kangaroo court. It just so happens that I have here, on my person. . . .

Read it and weep! Proof of your own life, Father! Chapter and verse, for all to hear. I know my rights and, may it please the kangaroo—um, the Court:

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Before Your Honor rules against me, take a look at this, sir. And may the best man win.

THE JUDGE *reads: Primo*: "The man who stands before you—Father 'Every-Trick-in-the-Book' Johnson—crook, punk, pervert, and all-around battering ram—was 'so tapped out the other day that, seeing as we don't take no wooden nickels at my joint—he hightails it into the woods—him and his wood: Bois de Boulogne for a little rough trade.'" [And enough rope to hang himself.]

FATHER JOHNSON: I deny it!

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: I can prove it!

FATHER JOHNSON: Lying liar! You can go to hell!

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: And I, for one, am prepared to place full faith and credit in the testimony of Scaffoldia. Makes good [dollars and] senses to me.

THE JUDGE *swears in Scaffoldia*: Place your hand on the Bible, Madam. In the matter before us, do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Was that true or false?[11]

SCAFFOLDIA: I'm compelled to tell the truth as I know it, Your Honor, *if* I know it:

So . . . it was about two months ago, Father John "Fire-in-the-Hole" Johnson, Esquire, comes around, whips it out, and shoots his wad. [Indecent exposure, if you ask me, Your Honor.] But, then, he don't have two dimes to rub together; so—lickety-split!—Mr. Merchant of Venice there, he stiffs one o' my girls and he's off like a shot. He *did* leave a little something behind but—hey!—there's no fuckin' installment plan at my joint![12]

THE JUDGE: You girl, Perrette-Come-Early! You're up! Tell me: What do you know about all this?

FATHER JOHNSON: Your Honor must be dreaming! What could *she* possibly have to say about me? Objection!

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: On what grounds?

If I might continue, Your Honor, and—you, Johnson!—I'll thank you to keep your so-called objections to yourself. Leave her alone! Perrette *shall* be examined, come hell or high water, if it's the last thing she does.

THE JUDGE: So, take the sacred oath for me, would you, Perrette?, and be quick about it!

PERRETTE: It's true that, over at the Three Moors—or maybe it was the Three Maracas?—who is it who's been coming by a lot lately to party with one of the girls but that eager beaver, Papa "Benderover, Ball-in-the-

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Fucking-Cup" Johnson! Only, then, come time to pay the piper, he don't got the small change for a two-bit hooker! Flat broke, he says. So, Father puts his pants back on—one leg at a time just like everybody else, Your Honor, I'll have you know—he takes a bow, and, then, he beats a hasty retreat. Just buggers off into the woods! And what's *she* gonna do but take it up the ass?[13]

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: Up the ass? King of Kings and Lord of—! Now, *that* must've been something to see, and that's the God's honest truth.

THE JUDGE: [Or it's a tall tail.] We shall now determine whether Olive has any recollection of these events.

Chop, chop, Olive, you're up! And let's get that story straight, shall we? In the matter of the testimony given before us today, do you swear, under penalty of [perjury] and of rotting in hell, to tell the truth, the whole truth and—? What *they* said. [And make it snappy!]

OLIVE: It was just before Ascension, Your Honor, when . . . who should turn up at his favorite watering hole up by the In-and-Out Motel but one Father "Cup-and-Ball, Bottoms-Up" Johnson, Esquire? And he's saying: "Pretty girl: looks to me like your hoo-ha's in serious need of a tune-up. How's about I tighten that thing right up for you? [It just so happens, I got the hardware on me and have I got the tool for you!]"

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: [{*To the Judge*} How very *gallant* of him.]

[*To Olive*] And you took it under advisement, did you? I mean, if that thing was gonna fall down anyway, you were already fucked on both ends, right? So, you let him, didn't you?

OLIVE: And that, Your Honor, is what we call double jeopardy. [{*Aside*} Or a fucking prolapse.]

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: [She means *prolapsarian*, Your Honor. What goes up must come down.©]

The defense rests. Let's have that ruling now, shall we?

THE JUDGE: In the matter before us of Slowpoke and Johnson and your respective bad acts, I'm thinking that—. Neither one of you johns is worth a tinker's damn, about which we are now prepared to rule:

[I could always banish him but . . .] Johnny Slowpoke shall go . . . free! With a clean slate! He is acquitted, his assets intact. There's such a thing as a statute of limitations, you know.

As for Johnson: for the aforementioned delicts, it shall be a suspended sentence.

THE COURT RECORDER: [*Indicating Father Johnson*] But, Your Honor! In light of your own ruling, sir, he must [either] be punished or make his

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fair share of restitution to Johnny Slowpoke. Minimally, sir, he must pay a fine.

[**SCAFFOLDIA:** That's the fact, Jack! You said it! Punishment or restitution; but, no matter how you cut it, he divvies up. He pays his fair share and we get made whole.][14]

THE JUDGE: Okeydokey, then, I'll penalize him! What do you say we cut off his genitals?

I do hereby assess, assign, and apportion his fair share in the amount of one ball.

SCAFFOLDIA: Wait, "apportion" him? Does seem a shame to break up the set.

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: They did say they wanted a piece of you, Johnson, and—ouch!—that's gotta hurt.

[**FATHER JOHNSON**]**:** [Damn activist judges!] You're really gonna cut it off?

JOHNNY SLOWPOKE: [{*To the audience*} And . . . cut! Chop, chop!

But, folks! Before we cut and run, the ball's in your court! There *is* the little matter of *our* piece of the action: our "cut," so to speak.]

Break up that set! He pays one ball. Let's make 'em whole. Cut off that ball!

SCAFFOLDIA: And settle up! Eats for us all—on *him*, milords—'cause one good turn deserves another. Live and learn. John Slowpoke has himself a ball: gets off to take his curtain call! The other winds up with his balls in a vice. That's just protocol in these here parts. *That* is the law for pimps. This is no free-for-all. Nuts to 'em all, folks! Balls away! And one last thing before you're gone—or two or three—I say to all:

Crazy's the judge who rules in haste.
How 'bout a song before you pay?

[Possible closing music[15]*]*

The End

NOTES

1. Martin is right, though, to correct a manifest error: the copyist has failed to announce the new speaker at the top of fol. 172v, which creates a situation in which the Judge would be answering himself.

2. "Jehan de Lagny" also came up as a derisive moniker for cuckolds in *The Shithouse* (*RLV*, #54; *HD*, #2, 452n). Another legend holds that the nickname likewise stuck to Alexander Farnèse, Duke of Parma, conqueror of the city of Lagny in 1590 (*SFQS*, note 1).

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3. I refer to the title of chap. 2 of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (32–69). Also, *Tréteaux*, a short-lived journal edited by Gari Muller from 1978 to 1984, was devoted to medieval drama.

4. Martin prefers *Gras Conseil* (*SFQS*, note 132). All "Fools' Day," i.e., the Feast of the Innocents (2: 14), was a favorite holiday of the Rouennais Conards and was celebrated on 28 December. See also *SFQS*, notes 73 and 136; and *PF*, 30–33.

5. See Martin on the *Chambres Hamelin*, the *morequin*, and *aulx troys mores* (2: 27–28; *SFQS*, notes 165, 167, 174). Feel free to shift the highly localized Norman setting, which includes, e.g., references to the thief-infested Rouvray Forest between Paris and Normandy (*SFQS*, note 155).

6. Figure 8 depicts the hanging. Departing from the usual rhyming octosyllabic couplets, this is clearly a song: *Tant pour chercher Jehan de Lagny, / J'ey de douleur et de destresse, / A Parys, à Troys, à Magny, / Tant pour chercher Jehan de Laigny. / Pendu soyt-il comme Margny, / En un gibet de grand haultesse; / Tant pour chercher Jehan de Laigny / J'ey de douleur & détresse!* (2: 5). Alternatively, you might try a version of "Poor, Pitiful Me."©

7. Trétaulde's reprise of the refrain (*RLV*, fol. 166r) is absent from Martin's online edition after v. 16.

8. Perrette's allusion to Bréban and Alençon (2: 10), e.g., seems driven by versification (*SFQS*, note 43); but Alençon was famously occupied by William the Conqueror and is noteworthy for its ongoing rivalry with Rouen about jurisdiction in Normandy. I've gone with an Old West feel and with the modern French propensity for Belgian jokes. Last, regarding *boire l'angoisse*, the *poire d'angoisse* or "pear of anguish" was an instrument of torture that opened the jawbones (*SFQS*, notes 46), whence my brank.

9. Pick whatever song you like, but this popular Norman number (*SFQS*, note 66) sounds very much like "It's May!"© from *Camelot: C'est à se joly moys de may / Que toutes herbes renouvelles / Et vous présenteray les belles, / Entièrement le cœur de moy* (2: 13). See also *MFST*, 197–98.

10. For his compensation, more spiritual than financial, the Pathelinesque denomination is the insignificant *mersis: Ausy vous eres des mersis, / Sy Dieu plaist plus de quatre cens* (2: 14). Why not go full-out absurd with a pantomime in which Father Johnson arranges for a judge or—better yet!—a kangaroo to sign off on the arrest warrant?

11. That's right: the trial even features the medieval equivalent of swearing in witnesses: *Par l'evangille de la Bible, / Nous dirés-vous pas vérité / De ce mot que j'ey récité? / Est-il mensonge ou [est-il] vray?* (2: 26).

12. Per Martin, this is the kind of behavior that traditionally inspired madams like Trétaulde of the *Trois Brus* (*RLV*, #37) to demand payment up front (*SFQS*, note 159). At 2: 27, the wordplay is related to two coins: the small silver *teston* and the Spanish *marabes* or *maravédis*. But a *marrabais* was also a hidden Jew; so, one cannot help but wonder about possible anti-Semitic connotations. We also encounter anew the aketon (*hoqueton*) of *Talking Turkey* (#8). In the context of the so-called collateral left behind, I hear punning on castration or circumcision: *Vint descouvrir son maroquin*

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/ Sans marabes ne sans testons, / Mais il laisa le hoqueton / Et gaignyst chemin o plus tost (2: 27).

13. For the *Troys Mores* (2: 27), let's not forget that *more* denoted "squirrel fur." I prefer a different critter; plus, a *morequin* was a coin of little value; and *le grand blanc*, here worth about 13 *deniers* or about $1.30, was, per Martin, the fee of the lower-level service-providers at a whorehouse (*SFQS*, note 167). Needless to dwell on the farcical reach of *ouvrir le cul*: "to bow" but, literally, to open up one's asshole (2: 28; *SFQS*, note 168).

14. As noted above, this is the speech (2: 29) that Martin reassigns to Olive (*SFQS*, note 182). It's a good idea, which I've retained in another way.

15. I reproduce the ending in its entirety, which revolves around legalistic wordplay on *partye*, *despartye*, *suspendre*, and *suspens*. Since Scaffoldia's final speech is fourteen lines, one could almost try a sonnet. And, for the closing music, you might go with, e.g., "He Come Undone"© or high camp with something like "I'm Gonna Make You Mine,"© as once imagined here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_xcxI_yFRI (accessed 28 May 2022). Here is the original Middle French (2: 29–31; *SFQS*, notes 182–195; my emphasis):

LE GREFFIER [OLIVE, per Martin]
Veu les parolles que vous dictes,
Il doibt avoir pugnition
Ou faire restitution
A Jehan de Lagny sa partye.

LE JUGE
Et bien! qu'il ayt une partye
De sa genitoyre coupée.

TRÉTAULDE [MESSIRE JEHAN per Martin, *SFQS*, note 184]
Fault-il qu'el soyt départye?

LE BADIN
Ouy, Vir(e)linquin, unne partye.

[PERETE, per Martin]
Voecy terible départye,
Qu'il est en ce poinct coupé [qu'il l'ayt en ce poinct découpée]!

LE BADIN
Y fault qu'il ayt une partye
De sa genitore coupp[é]e.

TRÉTAULDE
Il payera de tous la soupée
Pour faire nostre apoinctement.
Seigneurs, regardés bien comment
Jehan de Lagny a sy bien faict

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Qu'il est exemp de son mefaict.
L'autre qui n'estoyt ocuppé
A esté de vice achoppé.
Comme on pugnyst en tous cartiers
De plussieurs gens entremetiers,
De quoy on a la congnoisance.
Aussy je diroys volontiers
Un mot ou deulx, voiere le tiers:
De fol juge, brefve sentence.
Une chanson pour recompence.

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12.

Runaway Groom: A Final Number

[Le Porteur d'eau]

CAST OF CHARACTERS

[The NARRATOR]
GILES, the WATER-CARRIER (Le Porteur d'eau/Gille)
MADELEINE, the BRIDE (L'Espousée/L'Amoureuse/La Fille/Ma[g]dalaine)
[CLAIRE,] her MOTHER (Sa Mère/La Mère de L'Espouzée)
The MARRIAGE BROKER (L'Entremetteur)
The VIOLINS (Les Violons)
The GUESTS (Les Conviés)
[Madeleine's Employer]
[A Notary]
[The Priest]

PRODUCTION NOTES

Really? Published in Paris in 1632? What's this play doing *here*? For one thing, it was probably written in the fifteenth century; for another, it bookends our other marriage farce, *Not Gettin' Any* (#1). But for yet another, I respond: "asked and answered by Fournier" in his edition of the anonymous *Farce plaisante et récréative sur un trait qu'a joué un Porteur d'eau le jour de ses nopces dans Paris* (*TFR*, 456–560). *Runaway Groom* belongs to the history of farce in content and in spirit (*TFR*, 456). At the very least, 1632—also the publication date of *Marriage with a Grain of Salt* (*HD*, #12)—was a good year for revivals. Two copies of our 294-verse play are extant at the BNF, both digitized (Figure 9); and both betray numerous omissions, misattributions, and botched octosyllabic couplets.[1] There is even a moment when a snippet of narrative or a stage direction wends its way erroneously into the dialogue (*Répertoire*, 349–50; below, notes 6 and 13). Thus, for the several editors who have had a hand

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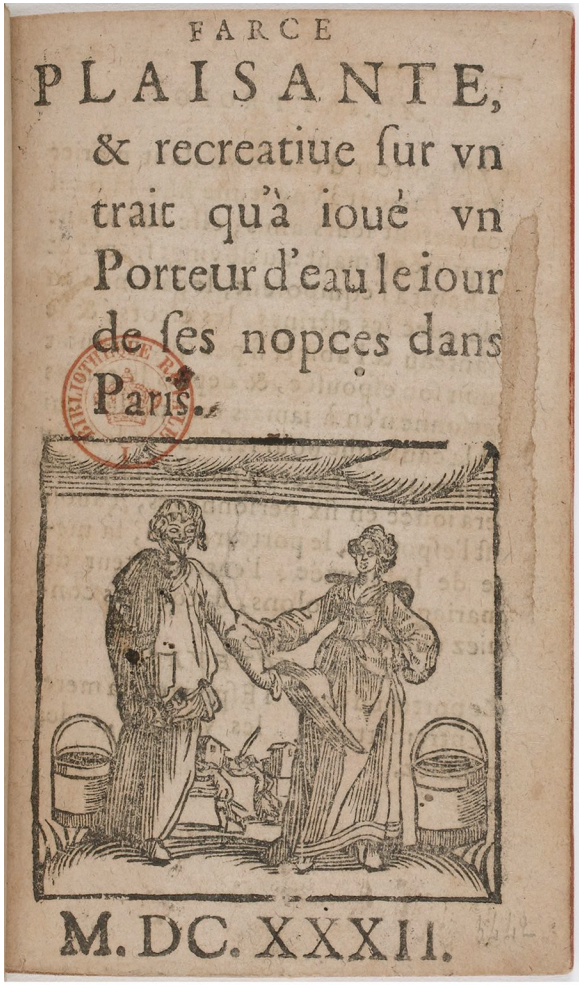

Figure 9. Frontispiece, *Le Porteur d'Eau.* Bibliothèque nationale. Public domain. http://catalogue. bnf .fr/ark:/12148/cb333889560

in this farce, starting with Madame de Montaran in her nineteenth-century *Recueil de livrets singuliers et rares* (#11), *remaniements* were the order of the day. That was certainly the case for Fournier, who made so many corrections that, per Charles Mazouer in his own reedition (*FGS*, 19–39), the humor was occasionally obscured (*FGS*, 122). As for translations, I know of only Léo Lamarche's into modern French for young readers; and she—yes, *she*—considered the piece more of a "dialogic anecdote" (*anecdote dialoguée*) than a play (200). *Runaway Groom* was summarized by Petit de Julleville (*RTC*, 218), by Faivre (*Répertoire*, 348–50), and, as it happens, by its own prologue, which

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reads like a chapter title from an eighteenth-century novel. (Skip it if you prefer to be surprised by the plot.)

This is the story—allegedly true—of a water-carrier named Giles and the unfortunate stunt (*trait*) he pulled on his wedding day. Suffice it to say that, by the time the curtain falls, he won't be carrying anybody's water anymore and, for his bride, Madeleine, it's curtains. As one of the most overdetermined female characters of the repertoire, Madeleine is scripted in accordance with her marital status at any given juncture (which status I'll indicate only at the site of its first usage in a scene): "The Bride-to-Be" or "The Bride" of the Cast of Characters (L'Espousée); "The Girl" or "The Daughter" (La Fille); and "The Love Interest," "The Intended" or "The Fiancée" (L'Amoureuse), that last one further connoting "The Lover," "The Object of Desire," or "The Prospective Fiancée." Weary of being in service and, having saved up some seven or eight *pistolles* for her future, Madeleine is susceptible to a sales pitch from Giles's unnamed marriage-broker buddy, who appears to be of slightly higher social standing than the rest of the cast (as evidenced by various permutations of *tu* vs. *vous* throughout). Consequently, she agrees to throw in her lot with Giles; and, as she explains things to her unnamed mother—"Claire" here for mom's "clarity"—Maddie's *thingy* is itching for service. Not to put too fine a point on it (or in it), the alternately vulgar and well-spoken young woman is horny: *Mon chos' ne me laisse en repos* (*TFR*, 457.2). That situation soon gives rise to other services.

Recall that, to this day, French couples are wed in two ceremonies: one civil, the other, religious. *Runaway Groom* invites us along to the *accordailles* (a formal exchange of promises at the official betrothal, sometimes made before a notary); next, to the renewed promises made at church before a priest (the *fiançailles*); and, last, to the wedding and the reception, the latter, typically a collective affair for which guests were expected to chip in (*FGS*, 133n; 134n; 137n). Giles and Madeleine's big day appears to take place in a two-level edifice, the attendees located, at one point, "up there" or *là-haut* (*TFR*, 460.1). More intriguingly, those attendees are represented as a single collective character that is more suited, offers Faivre, to the chorus of Greek tragedy than to farce (*Répertoire*, 349). Meet "The Guests" (Les Conviés), for whom entertainment is provided by another collective character, "The Violins" or, if you prefer, "The Fiddles" (Les Violons). It's the Violins who trigger the messy denouement when, in a single, slangy, dialectal, first-person plural, they try to collect payment (*Je voulons de l'argent*). When the Guests refuse (*Je ne vous devons rien*), things go south quickly (*TFR*, 460.2), but in an open-ended way that reminds us more of Beckett than Molière.

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While both Fournier and Faivre maintain that what this minidrama lacks in literary value is more than offset by its vivid and truthful depiction of the revelry of the "little people" of Paris (*TFR*, 456; *Répertoire*, 349), I submit that its genuine value lies elsewhere. Indeed, with a crime-blotter sensibility akin to that of *Witless Protection* (#10) and *Johnny Slowpoke* (#11), *Runaway Groom* is curiously modern—even postmodern—in its fluid relationship to time. Entire days or weeks go by within the span of a few verses or even within a single speech (*FGS*, 122; below, Scenes 6–7; 9–10). (For Mazouer, it all plays out over ten scenes; for me, it's a lucky thirteen.) This prompted Faivre to dub the tale of Giles not only a *récit* but a forerunner to the twentieth-century Italian avant-garde phenomenon known as the *teatro di narrazione* (*Répertoire*, 349).

For the grand finale, then, of *Trial by Farce*, I give you *Runaway Groom*, a postmedieval theater of the absurd with a twist. Something old, something new, something borrowed, bride is blue.

Sets, Costumes, or Props

Key to the proceedings: Giles's suit and borrowed coat as well as multiple gifts, a cashbox, and a basket or collection plate. Prior to the wedding feast, Giles needs an unimpressive engagement ring and, for his impromptu celebration with the Marriage Broker, jugs of wine and munchies. The cornucopian reception features better fare: roast pork and turkey and, on each table, candles, floral arrangements, and the like.

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"Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is?" By Robert Lamm. ASCAP Work ID: 340131191.

"Don't You Worry 'Bout a Thing." By Stevie Wonder.[2]

"Good News." Traditional.

"On the Right Track" By Stephen Schwartz and Roger Hirson. ASCAP Work ID: 450100033. See also Music Theatre International. https://www.mtishows.com/pippin.

"Take It as It Comes." By John Densmore, Robby Krieger, Ray Manzarek, and Jim Morrison [i.e., the Doors]. ASCAP Work ID: 500184894.

"Get Me to the Church on Time." By Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe. ASCAP Work ID: 370011353. See also Music Theatre International. https://www.mtishows.com/my-fair-lady-0.

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"Get on Your Feet." By Jorge Casas, John DeFaria, and Clay Ostwald. BMI Work #464221.

"If My Friends Could See Me Now." By Cy Coleman and Dorothy Fields. ASCAP Work ID: 390207551.

"All I Need Is the Girl." By Stephen Sondheim and Jule Styne. ASCAP Work ID: 310024228.

"Hey, Baby." By Duke Ellington. ASCAP Work ID: 380045781.

"Hey, Baby." By Bruce Channel and Margaret Cobb. BMI Work #561184.

"A Real Nice Clambake." By Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II. ASCAP Work ID: 480009443.

[The scene: a bustling town with multiple houses—including those of Claire and of Madeleine's employer, etc.—plus several bars; a civic structure; and, in the town square, a church atop many steps. Its adjoining reception hall features a raised seating area for the wedding party.]

FOREWORD

[THE NARRATOR]: Once upon a time, there was a water-carrier who, wishing to get married, wooed a young lady; and, having borrowed from her, for the occasion, a coat worth twenty francs and a suit of equal or similar value, our young Romeo then made off with all the wedding presents, the cash [for the caterers and the musicians,] the suit and the coat, and what little the bride had to her name. And it all happened right over there! That's where they invited all their friends. And no one's heard a thing about it ever since, which is why, the better to entertain the reader—[and, you too, Ladies and Gentlemen,]—we now make available to the public, [for the very first time,] this farce, which shall be played by a cast of six characters, to wit: the Bride, the Water-Carrier, the Mother of the Bride, the Marriage Broker, the Violins, and all the Guests.[3]

[SCENE 1]

[Lights up on Giles shortly after lunchtime.]

GILES, THE WATER-CARRIER, ***singing*****:** As I was walking down the street one day,© I stopped dead in my tracks along the way and blushed 'cause—there she was!—my future spouse! She bested any beauty anywhere, like in Harlequin romance, folks, I swear! That babe looked sharp: walked, like, elegantly. Seemed like she'd be the perfect fit for me and

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just my type. Not too fat, not too thin, plenty o' meat to grab on my way in. Love at first sight! I've got it bad. I mean—hey!—where's my Cyrano? My go-between? My pimp? Is there a broker in the house to hook me up? Because the play's the thing to catch the bride and end my suffering.[4]

Here, he sets off to find a friend of his.

[SCENE 2]

[GILES]: Peace be with you, my brother, hiya pal! Hey, bro: you'll never guess what brings me by.

THE MARRIAGE BROKER: Don't tell me, let me guess: it was your feet.

GILES: Yeah, yeah, yeah: very funny. It's something else, but I can't just come right out and say it. It's kinda scary, you know?

THE MARRIAGE BROKER: Then get lost, you big pussy! Or at least go get yourself some protection. How about a nice big halberd?

[GILES: A what?

THE MARRIAGE BROKER: A halberd. A battle ax. Stick 'em with the pointy end!]

GILES: Maybe I will, maybe I won't; but quit playin' around.

[*To the audience*] And that goes for you too, folks! Shut up and listen! You know Madeleine, right? Your neighbor? Well, I ran into her yesterday and, seein' as how you talk so good and shit: You think you could have a word with her for me? Hook me up, pal? You'd be doing me a solid. Come on, what do you say? You do make a mean marriage. Do this for me and I won't be ungrateful.

THE MARRIAGE BROKER: Sure thing, my brother, understood. But—ohmigod!—get ready to join the ranks of the martyrs.

GILES: Whatever. Makes me no never mind.

THE MARRIAGE BROKER: [Okeydokey,] then. So, you're asking me to speak for you. I'll do it, I tell you! I'll be your go-between. And I'll get back to you right away with her answer.

GILES: Later, bro! Please, after you! Do unto me like you'd want others to do unto you. And unto me too.

[Exit the Marriage Broker; Giles bides his time in the town square near a bar.]

[SCENE 3]

[Elsewhere in town]

Here, the Marriage Broker goes to find the girl, speaking to her thusly:

[THE MARRIAGE BROKER]: Yo, Madeleine! You'll never guess what brings me by.

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MADELEINE, THE LOVE INTEREST: Goodness, no, I have no idea.

THE MARRIAGE BROKER: Then, gurl, have I got a surprise for you! Tell me: Aren't you tired of being in service? You're not getting any younger, you know. Don't you want to get married?

MADELEINE: And to whom?, I'd like to know. Lord have mercy, what would some dumb-ass want with the likes of me?

THE MARRIAGE BROKER: Shut up! Come on now, Mads, I got one for you. [It just so happens] I've found you a suitor.

MADELEINE: Is that right? So? Who's the poor shmuck?

THE MARRIAGE BROKER: Shmuck? No, not so much. You can tell just by listening to him that he makes a decent living. So, just say the word and that's it! You'll be married, if you feel like it. And do also say whether you've managed to set a little something aside to sweeten that marriage pot.

MADELEINE: I've got a little bit of money I've been trying to save up from my wages. But who is this suitor of mine anyway? What line of work is he in?

THE MARRIAGE BROKER: I was just getting to that, Jeez. It's the water-carrier, goes by the name of Giles. You wouldn't be too bad off with him. Good company. Easy on the eyes. *And* he's French.

MADELEINE: I'll need my mother's permission first, of course. Why don't I just pop on over there right now and fill her in. See you tonight with the answer.

THE MARRIAGE BROKER: Okeydokey, then, Madeleine. I bid you adieu. Soon as you get back, you'll give me the good word.

Exit the girl to see her mother. [The Marriage Broker surveils Madeleine's activities].

[SCENE 4]

[At Claire's home]

[MADELEINE]: Good evening, Mother.

[CLAIRE,] THE MOTHER: Good evening, Madeleine. What brings you by, hon?

MADELEINE: Nothing much, really, unless you wanna count—. I can't take it anymore! What am I, a martyr here? I want to get married. I've got the mistress on my case twenty-four seven, yelling and screaming and complaining if I so much as go out on a date with a man. And, if you must know, I've got *things* to attend to. Not to put too fine a point on it or anything, Mother, but . . . I'm horny.

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CLAIRE: Now, why would you want to go and do a thing like that? No daughter of mine's gonna—. Take it from me, girl: running a household is hard work. You need your butter and your cheese and your salt for the soup. . . . And, then, there's the bread and the wood and the silver. Plus, once you've got kids in tow, this one needs a shirt, that one needs a hat. [You know what they say. Give pounds and crowns and French guineas, but not your life away!] Looking back on it now, I feel like a damn fool!

MADELEINE, THE DAUGHTER: You can try all you want to talk me out of it. I've made up my mind. This thing is a done deal.

CLAIRE: [Again with your thing!] But you might wind up with some drunk on your case all the time who's all: "Slut! Cow! Bonehead! Bitch! Whore! Gimme some money!" And, then, he hauls off and socks you one in the mouth.

That's what's bothering me, dear. I'd be worried sick about you. It's all very disturbing.

MADELEINE: [But, Mom:] it's not some fly-by-night operator they've got lined up for me. He makes a good living, which is why I want him. And I'm not giving him up. You won't talk me out of it either.

CLAIRE: And he is?

MADELEINE: The water-carrier. His name is Giles.

CLAIRE: Seems sharp enough, if he could just fix himself up a little.

MADELEINE: At least he makes an effort. Everybody says so.

CLAIRE: We'll have to let the family know about . . . . There's the betrothal party—the *accordailles*—for when you sign the contracts. And, then, after the *accordailles*, it's on to the engagement ceremony at the church—the *fiançailles*—and, then . . . .]

MADELEINE: 'Night, Mom, I gotta run before I catch hell from the mistress.

CLAIRE: 'Night, hon, off with you, then. Better hustle.

[Exit Madeleine. Lights down.]

[SCENE 5]

[Back in town, as Madeleine completes the last of her errands, she immediately encounters the Marriage Broker.]

MADELEINE, THE INTENDED: Oh, you're here. Good evening, Mister . . . Mister . . . what did you say your name was again? Anyway, I've got good news. My mother's in.

THE MARRIAGE BROKER: Fantastic! She's in, I'm outta here! Adieu, *Mademoiselle*. Just leave it all to me. I'll go find our poor Giles and put him out of his misery, bless his heart. He'll be over the moon.

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MADELEINE: Go on, then. Tell him he can go ahead and set the date for the official betrothal.

[Madeleine returns to the home of her employer for the night.] The Marriage Broker goes back to find the Water-Carrier.

[SCENE 6]

[In the town square]

THE MARRIAGE BROKER: Evening, friend. How's it going? How are things? How's tricks?

GILES: Lord have mercy, my brother, you tell me! Bring me up to speed, wouldya? How'd it go? Did you make any headway?

THE MARRIAGE BROKER: Shall I give it to you straight?

Don't you worry 'bout a thing!© She's in, and so's the mother. She was very receptive. Now, just name the day for those *accordailles* and we'll start setting some dates.

[**GILES:** The who?

THE MARRIAGE BROKER: The *accordailles*. The official signing! At the betrothal party. And, then, it's on to the engagement ceremony—the *fiançailles*—at the church.]

GILES: [And *fiançailles-yai-yai-yai-yai*!] Well, I'll be a—. Isn't that good, good, good, good news!© Put 'er there, pal, and let's pull out all the stops, my brother! Let's get this show on the road 'cause we're gonna party! I worked up a real appetite now for some goodies, lemme tell ya. I'll go get us some wine.

THE MARRIAGE BROKER: Party on, bro. Go for it. And, then, we'll talk some business.

[Exit Giles to seek provisions. He returns shortly, laden with large jugs—or boxes—of wine and various comestibles.]

GILES: Yo, bro! Here's the wine. Hey! Let's drink till the sun comes up!

THE MARRIAGE BROKER: Oh, no you don't! That's way too much wine. Remember: you've got to look your best for when you go see Madeleine. We'll have to come up with the guest list too and get those invites out.

GILES: Fine, let's do it! *After* we've had something to drink. I'll sound all smooth for when I gotta talk lovey-dovey and shit.

[The two men party until late into the night and eventually part company. Lights down.]

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[SCENE 7]

[The next morning, lights up on Claire's home. Madeleine has arrived very early to await Giles and the Marriage Broker. The two men meet in the town square.[5]*] Here, they leave to go see the Intended, and the Water-Carrier says to her:*

[GILES]: Peace be with you, baby doll. How ya doin' anyway?

MADELEINE, THE INTENDED: I'm well enough, thank you, praise the Lord. And you, Giles?

GILES: I'm at your service, sweetheart, [let's do this thing!]

Sorry. I don't know nothin' 'bout talkin' no sweet-talk. Guys like me, we just don't got no experience with how folks is doin' their lovemaking these days.

So, you tell *me*, babe—uh, *darling*: What do we do now?

MADELEINE: Not much really, except . . . where's your family? They're supposed to be here too.

GILES: Ain't got no family. My buddy [here's] gonna stand up for me.

CLAIRE: Poor baby. Very well, then, Giles. And, so . . . . [*She motions him to kneel.*] You want my daughter, is it?

GILES: If it's okay with you, ma'am. And her too.

[Giles is guided through the motions of betrothal, after which the foursome heads to the Town Hall.]

[SCENE 8]

[At the Town Hall, the Notary is already present, along with the invitees.]

CLAIRE: Well, here we are, Giles. Do you see all our friends right there? We've requested the honor of their presence and they've come of their own free will to celebrate your engagement. Before witnesses!

THE GUESTS: Don't just stand there, Giles, do something! You want to get the girl? Get on with the engagement! [Just sign right there on the dotted line!]

[Claire and the Marriage Broker indicate gesturally to the Notary that there is no written contract. Mightily annoyed, the Notary leaves in a huff.]

Okay, so make your promises. Go on.

GILES: Sure thing, gents, you got it!

This here ring good enough for you? She's a beaut, all right. Here you go, sugar—uh, *darling*—take it, it's yours. And me too. I make you—what's that they say again?—a gift of my whole heart or something?

MADELEINE, THE INTENDED: I thank you, good sir, for the honor that you deign to bestow upon me. Now, let's get down to business, shall we? When do you want to get married?

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GILES: How should I know? I wish it was already over and done with! I mean: it's my heart's desire and shit.

MADELEINE: It shall be two weeks from today. But do you, perchance, happen to own a suit?

GILES: Got one getup that's kinda nice. Check it out: I'm wearin' it right now! Folks is always sayin' "You should get engaged in that thing!"

[**THE GUESTS:** We say: "You should get engaged in that thing!"]

[**GILES** *continues*]**:** "It's fine for the engagement," they go: "besides, your fiancée, she can always get her hands on another one."[6]

[**THE GUESTS:** She will get her hands on another one!]

They get engaged, [after which everyone heads to the church.[7]]

[SCENE 9]

[Pantomime. At the church, before witnesses, the engagement ceremony takes place, after which everyone goes their separate ways except for Madeleine and Giles, who remain behind to talk.]

MADELEINE, THE FIANCÉE: And there you have it, Giles. Praise the Lord, we're engaged!

[Is that a *pistolle* in your pocket or are you just happy to see me? But, now that we're affianced,] let me be straight with you. I've got about two grand saved up. Maybe twenty-five hundred. You? Do you have any money at all?

GILES: Who, me? [*Afinanced*?] Nope. Not much. Thing is, I do okay 'cause I got nice houses on my route and all. It's a good living, you know? And I ain't jealous o' nobody neither. I just take it easy, baby, take it as it comes;© so, I make out fine.

MADELEINE: Uh-huh. That's super, but shall we stick to the business at hand? We've got to get the deposit to the caterers and the violinists and—. Let's go! It'll be Sunday before you know it, Giles, dear. And, then—bless your little heart, dream-boy—we'll really have something to celebrate.

GILES: Yeah, but I don't got no coat.

MADELEINE: Now, now, dear, not to worry. That'll all be taken care of in a flash. I must have one somewhere.

GILES: [Neither a borrower nor a vendor be.] But, hey! Thanks, babe. I mean: very well, Madeleine, darling. Go find me one, wouldya? Please?

[In mime, Madeline might summon the props master for a consultation.]

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[SCENE 10]

[Pantomime. As many as thirteen days elapse until the eve of the Sunday nuptials, during which time numerous preparations are made: the issuing of the invitations, the selection of the wedding dress, some maternal advice for the bride-to-be, etc.]

[SCENE 11]

[GILES]: So, tomorrow's the big day! We gotta get all dolled up for church, you know? The both of us dressed to the nines because . . . I'm getting married in the morning!©

[Lights down, possibly during a musical number.]

[SCENE 12]

[Lights up on the hall adjoining the church for the wedding reception, a do-it-yourself affair where preparations are underway. The Violins are tuning their instruments backstage when Madeleine, Giles, and Claire stop by to check on the setup. So too do the Guests.]

[GILES]: And what do you know! Hello, Sunday! Hey? Where is everybody? Don't tell me they didn't rush right over at the sound o' them squeaky fiddles!

MADELEINE, THE BRIDE-TO-BE: Oh, for heaven's sake, of course they did, Giles, they're right over there.

Everybody ready to pitch in?

GILES: You boys ready? On your mark, get set . . . .

THE GUESTS: Go! You bet we are!

THE VIOLINS: Not so fast, Groom-Boy!

[*To Claire*] What about us? The Violins? [You know: The squeaky ones?] Don't we get boutonnieres or something to go with our livery?

GILES: And, hey! What am I? Chopped *livery?* Jesus H. Christ Almighty, dudes, and fiddle-dee-dee! Chill! You'll get yours before you know it.[8]

They leave for the church, [where the pair is wed,] and, upon returning, the Water-Carrier speaks thusly:

[SCENE 13]

[At the reception hall, the wedding party takes their places at the raised seating area. Various members descend on occasion to dance.]

[GILES]: Come on in, gents, let's go! I don't know about you but, I swear! I'm famished! I'm starvin' here.

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THE GUESTS: It's about time! [Your gifts are over there.] Let's get this party started, folks, because . . . .

It's shivaree time! You, there! Violins! Get over here! Play something we can dance to! Come on everyone! Get on your feet!©

[A massive pantomime of eating, drinking, dancing, and various excesses ensues, perhaps accompanied by a musical number.[9]]

And what a wedding banquet this has been! Everything was delish: the suckling pig, the turkeys, and the cocks. Divine, we say.

GILES: You're too kind, gents, but now, it's time to—. Hey, what are you gonna do? We did do the best we could with what little we had to work with, you know? Hope you enjoyed it.

[More music and dancing follow, after which, Claire prepares to wrap up. She begins collecting what remains on the tables: flowers, vases, serving dishes, etc. She then picks up a large basket or plate for the solicitation of the expected financial contributions.]

CLAIRE: [Yoo-hoo! Giles!] Where'd that son-in-law of mine get off to? Now, everybody get ready to pitch in because—

[*To the Violins*] You: checks, please! Time to settle up.

[From the wedding party's elevated place of honor, Giles eagerly descends to take the basket. He makes the rounds until the collection receptacle is quite full, after which, he leaves the hall for the adjoining church. He moves down the aisles until he reaches the doorway and, while descending the steps, he stops.]

GILES: Just what kinda dumbass fool do they take me for anyhow?

If they could see me now!© Got me some money, a nice suit, a fine coat . . . . I'd have to be a complete moron, I swear, to stick around here one more minute! [Like I'm gonna carry their water forever!] No kidding, folks.

So much for marriage, I guess, 'cause, now, I got me the ways, the means, and the style to really make out! Wouldya get a load o' my peeps up there, folks! Nibblin' away at the spread. Sweet! Eat up, boys! [And exit, stage left!][10]

He leaves without saying a word [possibly pilfering various goodies on his way out.]

CLAIRE: Where's my son-in-law?

MADELEINE, THE BRIDE: He's down there. Call him.

CLAIRE: Giles! Giles!

THE GUESTS: He'd best get himself over here right now! Where is the "thank you" for the wedding guests?

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THE VIOLINS: Never have we seen anything like this! The groom bolts? Better find out where he is!

CLAIRE: Oh. My—. Lord have mercy! It's gone! Everything! The cashbox, the—. The gate's wide open. He even took the coat!

MADELEINE: Whatchoo talkin' about, mama?[11]

CLAIRE: It's true! Just like I said.

THE VIOLINS: Show me the money! Now!

THE GUESTS: Don't owe nothin'! Hey! The hell with you, no! Ain't gettin' no dough off us. We been had![12]

THE VIOLINS: Good God in heaven, we don't want a speech! And that's not all. You've got a balance due! Pay up! Tell me, tell *us*: Who's got the check?

THE GUESTS: Jeez, don't look at us! You figure it out. Hey Marriage Broker! You're gettin' a fight! [*They brandish weapons.*]

THE MARRIAGE BROKER: Sorry about that, folks. Oops.

THE VIOLINS: Show me the money!

MADELEINE, THE WIFE: My suit! My coat! My *pistolles* in his pocket! That was some stunt.

[*To the audience*] What? You people think this is funny?

CLAIRE: [*She turns toward the Guests.*] And the money for the caterer shall be paid by—[God knows you ate enough!]—*you*, gentlemen!

[{*To the audience*} And that goes for you too!]

THE GUESTS: You lie! We paid!

No, you!

No, you!

You too!

No, you!

They began to brawl.

[THE NARRATOR]: [And there you have it, Ladies and Gentlemen: they began to brawl. I mean, wouldn't you? And that's going to be that for this little interlude about the water-carrier.]

They fought. They brawled. Bang! bang! Pow! Pow! Boom! Boom! And that's the end of *The Runaway Groom*!

[Lights down as the sound becomes fainter and fainter.]

[Now, show us the money! Show us the money! Show us the money. . . .][13]

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NOTES

1. See BNF, RES-YF-3442 and Rés. 8-Z; Don-594 (577, 4, 7) at https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b86197038; or https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k72843c, respectively (both accessed 28 November 2020). Mazouer agrees with Antoine Adam that the play might date from the seventeenth century after all (*FGS*, 121).

2. While this particular song is not listed, Wonder's extensive catalog of other music appears in the ASCAP registry under two artist IPI numbers: 581621451 and 33189687.

3. Here is the original from BNF Res-YF-3442 (corrected by Fournier at *TFR*, 456): *Un porteur d'eau se voulant marier fit l'amour à une jeune fille là où ils convierent leurs amis; elle luy ayant emprunté un manteau de vingt francs & un habit à l'equipolent, le galland s'en alla avec les estrines, les escots, & le manteau & l'habit & si peu que pouvoit avoir son espousée, & depuis le temps personne n'en à jamais ouy parler* qui est la cause que pour resjoüir le lecteur on a mis ceste farce en public, *laquelle sera joüée en six personnages, sçavoir est: l'espousée, le porteur d'eau, la mère de l'espouzée, l'entremetteur du mariage, les violons, & tous les conviez ensemble* (2; my emphasis). Lamarche thinks that Madeleine will spend her savings on the coat (199).

4. Giles should either sing these lines or open with another number, perhaps "All I Need Is the Girl,"© "Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is?,"© or one of any number of versions of "Hey, Baby."© Since he speaks fourteen lines, feel free to create a sonnet. Again, see Brown on marriage farces (*MFST*, 39–40). Here is the Original Middle French (*TFR*, 457.1):

LE PORTEUR D'EAU

En me promenant dans les rües,
La couleur me vint toute esmeües,
De ce que je vis en passant
Une très belle jeune fille,
El' me sembla assez habille
Pour accomoder un garson,
D'autant que son maintien très bon,
Sa beauté, et sa bonne grasse,
Qui les autres beautez surpasse
M'a si bien donné dans le cœur,
Qu'il me faut un entremetteur
Aller treuver incontinent
Affin de treuver allégeance,
Dans ma douleur et ma souffrance.

5. Mazouer breaks the scenes slightly differently, with this moment, e.g., already playing out before the requisite witnesses (*FGS*, 132–34). I prefer more stage action, the better to convey through mime the summoning of the notary, the time and the

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place of the upcoming *accordailles* and *fiançailles*, etc., which would otherwise be unclarified.

6. *Chacun luy dist à ces propos* of the original (12) is corrected to *me dist* by Fournier (*TFR*, 459.1) and by Mazouer (*FGS*, 134n); but here is the question: Is a stage direction cuing the Guests to speak? Or is Giles reporting what people say? I've opted for both.

7. I read the stage direction *Ils s'en vont fiancer* (12; *TFR*, 459.1) as a cue to begin the new scene for the religious betrothal of the *fiançailles*.

8. Mazouer wisely restored the joke deleted by Fournier (*TFR*, 439.2): *Vos violons n'ont pas de livrée?* Giles responds: *Comment, vertubieu, je m'appelle livrée* (*FGS*, 136). The *livrée* refers to the ribbons festooning members of a wedding party: near equivalents of today's corsages and boutonnieres.

9. In light of the Guests' next collective line, you might try, from *Carousel*, "This Was a Real Nice Clambake."©

10. He might sing some variations on an earlier theme along the lines of: "Got my tweed pressed, got my best dress, all I need now is . . . to run!"© This is where we encounter "up there" (*là-haut*); so, when headed "over there" (*là-bas*), Giles is clearly on his way down (*TFR*, 460.1).

11. Any number of sensibilities would do here. Try: "What? What are you saying, Mom?" or "What exactly are you telling me here, Mother?"

12. I've retained the oddity of these five-foot free verses: *Je ne vous devons rien. / Comment, mort diable! / C'est chose admirable, / Je somes dupez.* (*TFR*, 460.2).

13. Some final confusion at *TFR*, 460.2, where Fournier renders as a stage direction what I believe, with Mazouer (*FGS*, 139n), to be the Narrator's closing intervention on p. 16 of the BNF original: *Ils commencèrent à se battre, / Comment il faut / Voilà le trait du porteur d'eau.*

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APPENDIX

Scholarly References to Copyrighted Materials

What more fitting way could there be to wrap an anthology of legalistic farces than with our legal duty? As in *The Farce of the Fart*, *Holy Deadlock*, and *Immaculate Deception*, I offer here a possible playlist, should any given troupe wish to follow up on my unscripted suggestions for rough translational equivalents of farce's music ("ABT," § "Prose, Verse, and Music"). I insist, moreover, on calling those suggestions "placeholder translations" because musical tastes evolve. So too must my translations, their own evolution more natural if they are untethered to my idiosyncratic musical moment. Unlikely to stand the test of time, the present song selections are *meant to be replaced and refreshed* by actors, directors, and readers, who may then strike the right chord for themselves. All, however, with these important caveats:

Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century *farceurs* were hardly bothered by copyright as we understand its protections today. Back then, all use was fair use. When actors launched into a rousing chorus of "*Celle qui m'a demandé*" in *Default Judgment Day* (#2) or of "*J'ay prins amours à ma devise*" in *Okay, Cupid* (#9), there was no need to clear permissions. Needless to say, that is in no way the case today. Therefore, I've fashioned this Appendix as a comparative musical tool, the better to respect both the original Middle French meanings and the postmedieval proprietary interests of musicians, lyricists, and performers. It works in tandem with each play's inventory, "Scholarly References to Copyrighted Materials," and it is designed to facilitate the proper acquisition of rights for each and every musical phrase or lyric that I've scrupulously marked throughout with the copyright symbol (©). Indeed, in an excess of caution, I've even marked those for which copyright manifestly *does not* apply, as for anonymous or traditional folk songs, spirituals, ballads, lullabies, nursery rhymes, or *lieder* in the public domain (in which case, I give the dates of composition, if known). For me, the pleasure of publicizing the work of gifted lyricists and composers is just a bonus.

Each title listed below is accompanied by the professional registry—there

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may be more than one that administers the rights to that song—and by its official identification number: ASCAP (www.ascap.com), BMI (www.bmi.com), Music Theatre International (mtishows.com), etc. This will guide interested readers through the first steps toward obtaining permission for use. Again, do note that rights may be held by lyricists, composers, performers, corporations, and others besides. For any projected performance of lyrics, melodies, or signature renditions, it may be necessary to seek permission from separate entities. Happily, that task is now easier thanks to Songview, a collaboration between ASCAP and BMI, whose repertories account for the vast majority of copyrighted music. The Songview database does an excellent job of signaling the percentages of ownership; so, I do not announce every single rightsholder. When a song title appears in no repertory, I supply the artist's registration number instead (IPI, e.g., for ASCAP).

Since I am concerned in this translation with the language of Middle French song as opposed to its often irrecoverable melodies, I provide, if known, the names of composers and lyricists only, rather than those of the artists who might have popularized the song in question. At no time do I appropriate any artist's trademark cover of any song. For the most part, I introduce collaborators in alphabetical order and not, as is commonly done, by priority of contribution, or by music first, lyrics second. But there are exceptions: it would be jarring to hear "Hammerstein and Rodgers" or "Sullivan and Gilbert." Also, I prefer to cite music creators by their more recognizable names: Farrokh Bulsara is Freddie Mercury; William Robinson Jr. is Smokey Robinson, and so on.

Finally, it bears repeating in no uncertain terms that *before contemplating production, theater practitioners are legally obligated to investigate and resolve any and all issues of copyright, fair use, or royalty arrangements related to any of the following songs, to which I make scholarly reference in this anthology. Failure to do so is not an option; and any lack of response to your queries does not denote consent from the copyright holder(s).*

Scholarly References to Copyrighted Materials (as indicated by © within the text)

"76 Trombones." By Meredith Willson. ASCAP Work ID: 490040443.

"A Change Is Gonna Come." By Sam Cooke.[1]

"Adelaide's Lament." By Frank Loesser. ASCAP Work ID: 310007757; or Music Theatre International. https://www.mtishows.com/guys-and-dolls

"Ain't That a Shame." By Dave Bartholomew and Antoine "Fats" Domino. BMI Work #13953.

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"Ain't Too Proud to Beg." By Eddie Holland and Norman Whitfield. BMI Work #15614.

"All by Myself." By Eric Carmen. Based on the "*Adagio Sostenuto*" of Rachmaninoff's Concerto No. 2 in C Minor, Opus 18 (ca. 1901). ASCAP Work ID: 898571618.

"All I Need Is the Girl." By Stephen Sondheim and Jule Styne. ASCAP Work ID: 310024228.

"*Als wie ein Lamm*." From the *Saint Matthew Passion*. By Johan Sebastian Bach (1727).

"Anticipation." By Carly Simon. ASCAP Work ID: 310124602.

"Anything You Can Do." By Irving Berlin. ASCAP Work ID: 310056043.

"Bad to the Bone." By George Thorogood. BMI Work #80431.

"Bali Hai." By Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II. ASCAP Work ID: 320010779.

"Bat Out of Hell." By James Richard Steinman. BMI Work #90098.

"Be My Baby." By Jeff Barry, Ellie Greenwich, and Phil Spector. BMI Work #92668.

"The Bible Tells Me So." By Dale Evans. ASCAP Work ID: 320044331.

"The Bonnie Banks o' Loch Lomond." ["You Take the High Road."] Traditional.

"Breaking Up Is Hard to Do." By Howard Greenfield and Neil Sedaka. BMI Work #148908.

"Brother John." From *The Singing Nun*. By Randy Sparks. ASCAP Work ID: 320139579.

"Bye-Bye, Baby, [Baby, Goodbye]." By Bob Crewe and Robert Gaudio. BMI #165170.

"Bye-Bye, Baby." By Mary Wells. BMI Work #165109.

"Carry that Weight." By John Lennon and Paul McCartney. BMI Work #187794.

"*C'est moi*." By Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe. Music Theatre International. https://www.mtishows.com/camelot

"*Chevaliers de la Table Ronde*." Traditional.

"Come and Get It." By Paul McCartney. ASCAP Work ID: 330175798.

"Come Rain or Come Shine." By Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer. ASCAP Work ID: 330077840.

"Come See About Me." By Lamont Dozier, Brian Holland, and Eddie Holland. BMI Work #232132.

"Crazy on You." By Ann Wilson and Nancy Wilson [i.e., Heart], and Roger Fisher. ASCAP Work ID: 330221666.

"Dancing in the Dark." By Bruce Springsteen. Administered by Universal Music Group: https://www.universalmusic.com

"The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze." 19th c.; published by George Leybourne and Gaston Lyle (1867).

"Ding-Dong! The Witch Is Dead." By Harold Arlen and E. Y. Harburg. ASCAP Work ID: 340037463.

"Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is?" By Robert Lamm. ASCAP Work ID: 340131191.

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"Dominique." By Soeur Sourire, aka, Jeannine Deckers. ASCAP Work ID: 340100063.
"Don't Leave Me This Way." By Kenneth Gamble, Cary Grant Gilbert, and Leon Huff. BMI Work #323300.
"Don't You Worry 'Bout a Thing." By Stevie Wonder.[2]
"Down by the Riverside." ["I Ain't Gonna Study War No More."] Spiritual.
"Down in MacConnachy Square." By Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe. Music Theatre International. https://www.mtishows.com/brigadoon-0
"Dreams." By Stevie Nicks. BMI Work # 343279.
"Fanfare for Twentieth-Century Fox." By Alfred Newman. ASCAP Work ID: 660080373.
"Field of Opportunity." By Neil Young. ASCAP Work ID: 360219907.
"Fly Me to the Moon." By Bart Howard. ASCAP Work ID: 360072940.
"For Unto Us a Child Is Born." From George Frideric Handel's *Messiah* (1741).
"Fugue for Tinhorns." ["I've Got the Horse Right Here."] By Frank Loesser. https://www.mtishows.com/guys-and-dolls
"The Game of Love." By Clint Ballard. ASCAP Work ID: 370078158.
"Get Me to the Church on Time." By Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe. ASCAP Work ID: 370011353. See also Music Theatre International. https://www.mtishows.com/my-fair-lady-0
"Get on Your Feet." By Jorge Casas, John DeFaria, and Clay Ostwald. BMI Work #464221.
"Girls Just Want to Have Fun." By Victor Carstarphen, Robert Hazard, Cyndi Lauper, Gene McFadden, Richard David Morel, and John Cavadus Whitehead. ASCAP Work ID: 372137750.
"Give a Little Whistle." By Leigh Harline and Ned Washington. ASCAP Work ID: 370020423.
"Good News." Traditional.
"Good Old-Fashioned Lover Boy." By Freddie Mercury. BMI Work #495994.
"Hard-Knock Life." By Martin Charnin and Charles Strouse. ASCAP Work ID: 380189662. See also Music Theatre International. https://www.mtishows.com/annie
"Here, There, and Everywhere." By John Lennon and Paul McCartney. ASCAP Work ID: 380119308.
"Hey, Baby." By Bruce Channel and Margaret Cobb. BMI Work #561184.
"Hey, Baby." By Duke Ellington. ASCAP Work ID: 380045781.
"Hey, You." By Roger Waters. BMI Work #563900.
"High Noon." ["Do Not Forsake Me."] By Dmitri Tiomkin and Ned Washington. ASCAP Work ID: 895496601.
"Hit the Road, Jack." By Percy Mayfield. BMI Work #571691.

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"Hold Your Head Up." By Rod Argent and Chris White. BMI Work #575834.
"Home on the Range." Daniel E. Kelly and Brewster Higley (1872).
"Hot Stuff." By Peter Bellotte and Harold Faltermeier. BMI Work #587659.
"Hunting High and Low." By Pal Waaktaar. BMI Work #598866.
"Hush, Little Baby." ["Mockingbird" lullaby.] Traditional.
"I Can See Clearly Now." By Johnny Nash. ASCAP Work ID: 390255937.
"*Ich bin die fesche Lola*." ["Naughty Lola."] By Friedrich Hollaender, Robert Liebmann, and Richard Rillo. ASCAP Work ID: 390089304.
"I Fall to Pieces." By Hank Cochran and Howard Harlan. BMI Work #621283.
"If Ever I Would Leave You." By Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe. Music Theatre International. https://www.mtishows.com/camelot
"If My Friends Could See Me Now." By Cy Coleman and Dorothy Fields. ASCAP Work ID: 390207551.
"I Fought the Law." By Sonny Curtis. BMI Work #622695.
"I Got Plenty o' Nuttin'." By George Gershwin, Ira Gershwin, and DuBose Heyward. ASCAP Work ID: 390020583.
"I Live for Your Love." By Pamela Rewsick, Richard Waggoner, and Stephen Werfel. BMI Work #634966.
"I'll Be There for You." By David Crane, Marta Kauffman, Michael Jay Skloff, Philip Solem, Danny Wilde, and Allee Willis. BMI Work #2033645.
"I'm Gonna Make You Mine." By Tony Romeo. BMI Work #656191.
"I'm Not Your Stepping Stone." By Tommy Boyce and Bobby Hart. BMI Work #662711.
"Istanbul, [not Constantinople]." By James Kennedy and Nat Simon. ASCAP Work ID: 390147090.
"It Ain't the Meat, It's the Motion." By Henry Glover and Sydney Nathan. BMI Work #735013.
"It Really Was No Miracle." By Harold Arlen and E. Y. Harburg. ASCAP Work ID: 690299626.
"It's May." By Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe. Music Theatre International. https://www.mtishows.com/camelot
"It's Not for Me to Say." By Robert Allen and Al Stillman. ASCAP Work ID: 390157034.
"I've Come to Wive It Wealthily." By Cole Porter. ASCAP Work ID: 390073553.
"I Will Follow Him." ["Chariot."] By Paul Julien André Mauriat, Jacques Plante, and Franck Marius Louis Pourcel. ASCAP Work ID: 330425866.
"Joint Is Jumpin." By Fats Waller, J. C. Johnson, and Andy Razaf. BMI Work #40018486.
"Just What I Needed." By Rick Otcasek [Ocasek].[3]
"The K-I-S-S-I-N-G Song." Nursery rhyme.
"Let's Call the Whole Thing Off." By George and Ira Gershwin. ASCAP Work ID: 42003061.

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"Light My Fire." By John Paul Densmore, Robert A. Krieger, Raymond D. Manzarek, and Jim Morrison [i.e., the Doors]. ASCAP Work ID: 420138596.

"Little Less Talk and a Lot More Action." By Keith W. Hinton and Jimmy Alan Stewart. BMI Work #880887.

"Lola." By Ray Davies. BMI Work #890725.

"Losing My Religion." By Robert Baskaran, William Berry, Peter Buck, Michael Mills, John Michael Stipe, and Brian Wakefield. BMI Work #20325189.

"The Madison Time." By Ray Bryant and Edwin L. Morrison. BMI #941544.

"A Man Needs a Maid." By Neil Young. ASCAP Work ID: 430206627.

"Mighty-Mouse Theme Song." By Marshall Barer and Philip Scheib. BMI Work #990567.

"*Mister Ed* Theme." By Jay Livingston and Ray Evans. ASCAP Work ID: 430074001.

"Money." ["That's What I Want."] By Janie Bradford and Berry Gordy. BMI Work #1005007.

"No Time at All." By Stephen Lawrence Schwartz. ASCAP Work ID: 440077409. See also Music Theatre International. https://www.mtishows.com/pippin

"Old Paint." Traditional.

"Once in a Lifetime." ["Letting the Days Go By."] By David Byrne, Brian Eno, Christopher Frantz, Jerry Harrison, and Martina Weymouth. BMI Work #1117241.

"On the Right Track" By Stephen Schwartz and Roger Hirson. ASCAP Work ID: 450100033. See also Music Theatre International. https://www.mtishows.com/pippin

"Papa Was a Rolling Stone." By Barrett Strong and Norman Whitfield. BMI Work #1150014.

"Piano Lesson." ["If You Don't Mind My Saying So."] By Meredith Willson. ASCAP Work ID: 460038477.

"Poor, Poor Pitiful Me." By Warren Zevon. BMI Work #1189347.

"Pop, Goes the Weasel." Nursery rhyme.

"Promises, Promises." By Burt Bachrach and Hal David. www.concordtheatricals.com/p/44675/promises-promises

"A Real Nice Clambake." By Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II. ASCAP Work ID: 480009443.

"Ride a Cock Horse to Banbury Cross." Traditional.

"Runaway." By Max Crook and Del Shannon. ASCAP Work ID: 312550193.

"Shake Your Booty." By Harry Wayne Casey and Rick Finch. BMI Work #1318490.

"She's Come Undone." By Randy Bachmann. BMI Work #1572184.

"Shop Around." By Berry Gordy and Smokey Robinson. ASCAP Work ID: 490363247.

"Signed, Sealed, Delivered, I'm Yours." By Lee Garrett, Lula Mae Hardaway, Stevie Wonder, and Syreeta Wright. ASCAP Work ID: 490293528.

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"Snake." By Oscar Brown Jr. BMI Work #1361249.
"Solid [as a Rock]." By Nickolas Ashford and Valerie Simpson. ASCAP Work ID: 490546059.
"Someone to Lay Down Beside Me." By Karla Bonoff. BMI Work #1376250.
"Sometimes I Feel like a Motherless Child." Spiritual.
"Spinning Wheel." By Thomas David Clayton. BMI Work #1396227.
"Spring Carol." From the *Ceremony of Carols*. By Benjamin Britten (1942).
"Stand and Deliver." By Steven George, John Lang, and Richard Page. ASCAP Work ID: 490612325.
"Sweet Gypsy Rose." By Irwin Levine and Russell Brown. BMI Work #1294630.
"Take It as It Comes." By John Densmore, Robby Krieger, Ray Manzarek, and Jim Morrison [i.e., the Doors]. ASCAP Work ID: 500184894.
"Thank Heaven for Little Girls." By Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe. ASCAP Work ID: 500030817.
"These Boots Are Made for Walkin'." By Lee Hazlewood. ASCAP Work ID: 500170925.
"Those Were the Days." [Theme song from *All in the Family*.] By Lee Adams and Charles Strouse. ASCAP Work ID: 500206922.
"Those Were the Days." By Eugene Raskin. ASCAP Work ID: 500195793.
"Time of the Season." By Rod Argent. BMI Work #1516893.
"Treat Her Right." By Roy Head and Gene Kurtz. BMI Work #1542510.
"To Be a Pilgrim." ["He Who Would Valiant Be."] Hymn based on lyrics by John Bunyan (1684).
"Truckin'." By Jerry Garcia and Robert Hunter. ASCAP Work ID: 500205665.
"We Are Family." By Bernard Edwards and Nile Gregory Rodgers. BMI Work #1612850.
"We Go Together." By Warren Casey and Jim Jacobs. ASCAP Work ID 530175918.
"We're Off to See the Wizard." By Harold Arlen and E. Y. Harburg. ASCAP Work ID: 530031555.
"Whatever Lola Wants." By Richard Adler and Jerry Ross. ASCAP Work ID: 530045862.
"Whatever Will Be Will Be." ["*Que Sera Sera*."] By Jay Livingston and Raymond Evans. ASCAP Work ID: 530045880.
"What Is a Youth?" From *Romeo and Juliet*. By Nino Rota. ASCAP Work ID: 530159954.
"What Kind of Fool Am I?" By Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley. BMI Work #1635112.
"What's Up with That?" (from *Saturday Night Live*). By Katreese Barnes. BMI Work #11137681.
"When the Saints Come Marching In." Traditional.
"The Wind Beneath My Wings." By Larry J. Henley and Jeff Alan Silbar. ASCAP Work ID: 530268050 and BMI Work #1678281.

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"You Give Love a Bad Name." By Jon Bongiovi, Desmond Child, and Richard Sambora. ASCAP ID: 550147303.

"You Really Got Me." By Ray Davies. BMI Work #1733421.

NOTES

1. As of this writing, "A Change Is Gonna Come" is not listed in Songview; but Cooke's current affiliation is BMI under IPI #00006711415.

2. While this particular song is not listed, Wonder's extensive catalog of other music is listed in the ASCAP registry under two artist IPI numbers: 581621451 and 33189687.

3. In an apparent response to other licensing interests, the ASCAP Work ID for this song (400075030) was removed from the registry as of 24 March 2021.

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